



Strange as IT Seems.



IT only gets stranger

Strange as IT Seems by Number Ten

Category: It, Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Sci-Fi, Supernatural

Language: English

Characters: Bill D., Eleven/Jane H., OC, Steve H.

Pairings: Steve H./OC

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-01-13 23:17:29

Updated: 2019-11-17 21:09:31

Packaged: 2019-12-12 03:13:47

Rating: T

Chapters: 14

Words: 29,310

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: When Derry is evacuated, the Losers club goes to the quiet town of Hawkins, Indiana, where they should be safe. Joined by his cousin, Mia, Bill and his friends begin to adapt to small-town life, making friends and fitting in better. However, the illusion is shattered when Georgie goes missing one day, El starts having nightmares, and Will begins to feel sick again.

1. Prologue: Evacuation

Prologue: Evacuation

A/N: Here's probably one of the many crossovers of Stranger Things and IT. All rights go to Warner Bros for IT and to Netflix for Stranger Things. For a timeline, it's just after Season 2 of ST. Also, in this alternate version, Georgie was not killed, and the Losers did not fully defeat It. Additionally, Derry is being evacuated for reasons that will be explained eventually in the story. However, don't expect Georgie or the kids to stay safe for very long in this town.

"Bill hurry up and bring the last of your stuff down," his mother calls from the bottom of the stairs.

"Vroom, Vroom!" is heard throughout the emptying house as Georgie pushes his favourite fire truck through the nearly empty house.

"George Elmer Denbrough, put that back in its box and help me carry these to the car," she says sternly after her youngest nearly knocked her over with his truck.

"Okay Mommy," the sweet little six-year-old says, picking up his vehicle, putting it in the nearest box and grabbing the lightest thing he could carry.

"Bill, come on," his father calls. "Daylight's wasting."

"I-I'm c-coming," Bill sighs in frustration. He packs the rest of his art supplies and his model space shuttle into the last box. He stops to look around at his now empty room. The posters of his favourite movies were rolled up and put away, the books that lined his shelves were packed with the other volumes and his space mobile that once hung from his ceiling was gone. The only things remaining was his desk, which was too big to be moved out and his bed, now void of any covers.

He wanted to go... he really did. He hated Derry like most of his friends did. Nothing felt right, and everyone turned their backs on what was really happening. They had seen it... The Loser's Club had

seen IT and what it could do. It nearly killed his little brother and all of them. But apparently, Eddie Kasprak's mother had gone to a higher authority; outside of the small Maine town, claiming how dangerous it was for her to raise her son in this place. Apparently, somebody listened to her rants of insanity because the government had ordered a mandatory evacuation of the town. Whether they might have found what was lurking in the sewers of the town or not was still a mystery to them. The reason given was that high levels of toxins had been found in the water levels and all those within Derry's limits had to leave effectively and immediately to avoid any further contamination.

The families were given several choices as to where to relocate temporarily and fortunately for Bill, all his friends' families had chosen the same place. All except Mike; since he lived on a farm, he technically wasn't in Derry and his grandfather refused to leave their livelihood behind. The friends had said goodbye to him the day before, promising to write to him, plus Mike could tell them if the government really was looking for IT or not

Meanwhile, all of Bill's friends' families had different reasons for choosing the same location. Stanley's father was looking for a town with a synagogue for his family to worship properly. Eddie's mom wanted somewhere clean and with low crime rates, preferably protected by the military. Beverly's new foster family, after her father was arrested for abuse of her, wanted to give her a place far away from all the trauma. Ben, while not happy to be moving again, just wanted to be near Bev. And for Richie, his family just went with the flow of people.

However, the best part was that Henry Bowers' family was moving to another location, allowing The Losers Club to finally be at peace. It was a chance to start anew, maybe ditch the derogatory name of their club.

Despite what they were escaping from, Bill would still miss his home. It's where he'd grown up and was the place he felt the safest, except for the basement. He wondered if there would be a place for him and his friends to ride their bikes around or play baseball, would there be places to go swimming or hike? His mind filled with many of these questions as he watched his dad tie his bike Silver and Georgie's bike

with training wheels on to the roof of their station wagon. He gathers the rest of his things, shutting the box and heading down the stairs, now devoid of any family pictures or decorations.

Bill walks slowly towards the door, passing the empty house. He's so lost in his own thoughts that he doesn't hear his dad come up behind him.

"Don't worry Billy," his dad, says ruffling his son's hair. "We'll be back in Derry before you know it."

The preteen swallows and forces a smile on his face. "R-Right."

"But for now, it's the open road," he says, jingling his keys. He takes the last of Bill's boxes and puts it into the trailer hitched to the back of their car. The young boy manages to grab his sketch and notebook from the top of the pile before getting into the crowded car next to his brother.

Georgie makes plane noises while flying one of his older brother's hand-me-down toy planes.

"Coming in for a landing..." the six-year-old says, landing on his brother's forearm. Bill playfully swats it away as his dad does one last check, locks up the house and slides into the driving seat.

"All ready?" he asks.

"Does anyone need to go to the bathroom before we go?" his mother asks, looking directly at the youngest in the car.

"Nope," he says proudly.

"Okay then, let's move out," his father says, starting the car.

Bill stares out the window at the neighbourhood that he once knew as home... His family was one of the last in the area to move out, it now looked like a ghost town, so eerily quiet, so still. They pass some men in yellow hazmat suits, walking towards the nearest storm drain.

"What are they doing Billy?" Georgie asks.

"S-Sealing off the s-ewers," he answers, watching and hoping that the men from the government could kill what was down there.

"Good." The youngest boy says firmly, before going back to his airplanes.

"H-How long did they s-say the c-cleaning would t-take?" Bill asks his mother.

"A few months, maybe a year, it was unclear in the newsletter," she answers.

The family says nothing more as a man dressed in a military uniform comes to help direct them out of the town. The preteen watches the shops that are now closed, the movie theatre advertising *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Red Dawn*, and the town square where the Paul Bunion statue stood, it's creepy, frozen smile as if it was glad that the Derry citizens were leaving. There's a line of cars leading out of town through the main street and Bill can see Richie's family just behind them, the four-eyed kid shouting at any scientists who happened to be leaning down near in sewer grate, asking them if it was a full moon tonight, and asking the soldiers if he can borrow their guns.

As the car finally leaves town, Bill can see Mike on his bike by the side of the road, next to the *Welcome to Derry* sign. He's watching the parade of citizens leaving with sadness and jealousy. He wishes he was going too, to where his friends were and away from the town his grandfather had called "cursed." He spots his friend and waves, Bill returning the gesture solemnly. He promises that he will write to his friend as soon as they were settled.

Then it was the open road. Wide open fields, forests shadowing the road from the sun and the beautiful Maine coast for as far as the eye could see. The late summer sun beats down on the pavement, baking it to scalding temperatures and tufts of wheat rustles in the breeze. Everyone in the car is very quiet as the journey dragged on, Georgie fell asleep in the back and Bill sketches lazily in his book. Suddenly, a thought pops into his head.

"I-Is M-Mia going to meet-t us there?" Bill asks as the car drifts over a nearby hill.

"Grandpa Bill and Grandma Marian are dropping her off once we get settled," his father answers.

Mia Rogers was Bill and Georgie's cousin from his mom's side. She was a couple of years older than Bill, almost eighteen, pretty in her own way, but she was not as lucky as the boys in terms of having a stable family life. Her situation mirrored Beverly's almost to a-t.

Caroline White was adopted into the family after a large-scale tragedy left her an orphan, in which she lost her mother. She was now the boys' mother's adoptive sister and grew up normally afterwards. Their Aunt Carrie worked at a research facility until she met Joel Rogers at a bar one night. He was charming and sweet; Caroline fell hook line and sinker for his act. They got pregnant after less than six months of dating. Bill's mother thought that her adopted sister was a fool to rush into everything so quickly, but since it was her first real relationship, Aunt Carrie clung onto the first person who gave her attention. It wasn't long before Carrie realized her mistake. Joel Rogers, their uncle, was a raving lunatic, a violent man with serious drug and alcohol problems and he tended to use his fists rather than his words. He'd hidden his habits well from his doting girlfriend, but once he found out he was going to be a father, the abuse came back. Mia was born out of wedlock nine months later. Their Aunt Carrie then tried to marry this abusive man, but even then, their life was truly awful. Carrie had her own set of emotional problems, but she was an amazing mother. She'd vowed never to make her mother's mistakes. Unfortunately, Joel Rogers just seemed to repeat his. He couldn't hold down a job and was physically, emotionally, and verbally abusive. Since Carrie had grown up in a similar type of household for so long, it felt almost normal to her. However, she saw the way her child suffered from the fighting and the abuse and tried to change Joel. She tried to make it work, she gave up when her daughter was rushed to the hospital with broken ribs. She packed the house and her teenage daughter while her soon-to-be ex-husband spent a few months in the slammer for injuring Mia. She filed for divorce and tried to start anew in Arkansas and then Maine. However, it didn't last very long. Their Uncle Joel was released on a technicality since Caroline and Mia Rogers did not stay in town long enough to testify against him and get a conviction. Once he was free, he came looking for them

Knowing that Joel would try to hunt them down, Aunt Carrie sent Mia to live with her adopted grandparents until the mother could find a safe place for the two of them to live. But now, Joel had been seen in the town where Bill's grandparents lived so Mia was to relocate with the Denbrough family as soon as possible. Everyone hoped the distance would be enough.

Bill was reluctant to have Mia living with them, after all, she was a teenage girl and none of the ones in their school were very nice. All they did was slut-shame each other and giggle about boys and makeup. He barely knew her as a person, so he was nervous, to say the least.

Finally, after several rest stops and one bad experience with a moose in the road, the Denbrough family were nearing their destination. Another small town as far as Bill could tell, with a large what looked like a military facility upon the hills. It wasn't Derry, but it was the closest they were going to get. In the fading light, Bill can hardly read the sign as they drive past it.

Welcome to Hawkins, Indiana

You'll Never Want to Leave

2. Chapter 1: Welcome to the Dungeon

"My Owlbear claws your Rust Monster's guts out," Dustin shouts, practically spraying the board with his spit.

"Says you!" Lucas says back. "I play Gelatinous cube to consume your owlbear, nothing's going to be left of it."

"It's your deciding move Will," Mike says. He sits with his Dungeon Master set in front of him, Eleven watches with curiosity and confusion. She doesn't stray far from Mike's side the entire time. He gives her pointers on what monsters to play and explains what the best strategy was. She didn't really care about the game at all, just being with Mike and being treated like one of their Party was enough... She thinks she's being called a Mage.

"I summon my Spectre to cast the spell..." Will says eagerly.

Mike rolls the dice.

"It takes effect!"

"What? No, come on!" Dustin groans.

"What will El the Mage do?" Mike asks encouragingly.

El is staring intently at the board, waiting for her turn.

"I play... the Tarrasque," El says with a smirk. She uses her powers to move it over and knock all the other figurines off the board.

"WHAT?!" Dustin shouts.

"NO FAIR!" Lucas screeches.

"I think our Mage just won," Mike says.

"No fair dude, you were helping her the whole time!" Dustin whines.

"Beginners luck," Will shrugs, taking his pieces back. Personally, he was just relieved that everyone was playing D&D again, after a rather

difficult summer of girl drama and Russian conspiracies.

"And she won... Do you really want to protest Dust?" Mike says.

El smirks and wipes a dribble of blood from her nose. Dustin leans back in defeat, knowing not to push the matter any further with their superhero of a friend.

"Does this mean it's over?" Max groans pulling out her Walkman headphones having lost interest in the game long ago. She had been reading a random magazine that was lying around the house. Both she and Eleven had been invited to Mike's basement for some "fun" times, instead of a boring board game. The only thing she found remotely interesting was how Will could fit ten Cheetos in his mouth and Lucas could suck root beer out of three straws at the same time.

"It is, and here's your prize," Mike says, wrapping El in a big hug. "You did great El... sorry, Jane."

None of the four boys were used to calling Eleven by her new adopted name. She was always El to them, but in order to protect her and give her a sense of normality, they had to call her Jane.

Eleven accepts the hug gleefully, managing to laugh a little bit.

"You know Max, you could've saved us if you stayed in the game," Dustin says.

"What can I say, I'm a zoomer, I don't like staying in one place for very long."

"You know a zoomer is not..." Dustin begins, but Lucas stomps on his foot.

"Ow! What the hell Luc!"

"She's a zoomer and that's what she is," he smiles at Max and she blushes slightly under her freckles. Despite how many times she'd "dumped" him, he still had a way of making her smile, the loveable goof-ball.

"Now can we please do something else, something more interesting?"

Max asks.

Just then Mrs. Wheeler sticks her head down into the basement.

"Max, your Mom just called, she wants you home now to get ready for school tomorrow."

"Oh, come on!" the redhead mutters under her breath.

"Will, your brother is coming to pick you very soon and Jane, Chief Hopper called, he'll be over to pick you up, he's running a little late directing traffic."

Eleven swallows. "Thank... you," she says quietly.

Mike gives her an encouraging smile, knowing social interactions were still not her strongest suit. Max picks up her skateboard and begins trudging up the stairs, the rest of the group following behind her.

"I can't believe school starts tomorrow," Will sighs, grabbing an apple from the fruit bowl in the kitchen.

"It's like that hive we burned down," Max grumbles as well. "Dark, ashy and upside down..."

Everyone shoots a look at her and she shrinks back from her statement. It had been almost half a year since Eleven had closed the gate to the Upside Down and Will had been slug-free, but the wounds still felt fresh to the group. The trauma was immense for all of them and they were all taking baby steps to recover. Will shrinks slightly at the mention, but says nothing else and continues eating his apple.

There had been another near encounter this past summer on the Fourth of July, where Dustin, Steve, Lucas' sister Erica, and Steve's friend, Robin, had discovered a secret Russian base underneath Starcourt Mall, who were attempting to re-open the gate. Fortunately, the plot had been foiled before any serious damage had been done and while the Mall had caught fire at one point, the local hangout spot was still intact.

"Sorry," Max says.

Mike stops at the door when he sees Johnny pull up in the beat-up family car. He nearly vomits when he sees his sister get out of the passenger door, the stupid giddy look in her eyes he saw when she'd been dating Steve.

"You think they've done it yet?" Dustin asks randomly.

Mike slugs his curly-haired friend in the shoulder and Will stomps on his foot.

"OW! Again, with the abuse."

"That's my sister you're talking about," he hisses.

"And my brother," Will mutters, turning away to finish his apple.

"What? They look like they're in love, don't they?" Dustin protests.

"Love?" Eleven asks, tilting her head to the side. "What's love?"

Mike swallows hard, not really sure how to explain it to the girl he had deep feelings for. He wasn't sure if it was love... maybe it was, but he was far from ready to have that conversation with her.

The group watches as Johnny gives Nancy a kiss on the cheek before she turns to kiss him fully. The preteens look away in slight disgust, except for Eleven, who watches with curiosity.

"That's love," Max explains. "It's this feeling you get inside yourself, it makes you say stupid things, you feel like you're going to vomit, your head feels like it's drifting away..."

El looks at her in confusion.

"It's hard to describe," Mike says quickly.

"Just think if they get married, you guys are brothers-in-law," Dustin continues to tease.

He backs away before Mike and Will can hit him again. Lucas and the others follow suit as Nancy starts coming up the driveway towards the front door, wrapped in Johnny's jean jacket.

Johnny honks the horn indicating it was time for his brother to join him.

"I'll see you guys tomorrow," Will says, grabbing his coat and opening the door. He nearly runs into Mike's older sister.

"Oh sorry, Nancy," he says, not even looking up.

"Bye Will," she says kindly as the kid heads towards his brother's car. She passes the other group members, not really caring if they saw her and Johnny, Mike would pay for that later. She goes upstairs without a word to anyone.

"Oh yeah, also everything else becomes invisible to you," Max adds in her explanation. "Anyways, I'll see you, nerds, tomorrow."

"You sure you don't want me to come with you?" Lucas asks.

Max blushes but shakes her head.

"No, I'm good," Max says. She walks out onto the front lawn, putting her board down and getting onto it, she rides along the sidewalk and down the street.

Johnny honks at the other kids, waving as Will gets into the front seat. The others wave in response before the elder teenager starts to turn around. That is until he must veer to the side to avoid an oncoming car travelling into the cul-de-sac.

"Who's that?" Will asks, curiously as a station wagon with a trailer hitched to the back and bicycles tied to the roof pulls into the vacant house nearby.

"New neighbours I guess," Johnny shrugs as he begins driving towards home.

The appearance was not lost on the other onlookers.

"Who the hell is that?" Dustin asks, hopping onto the couch to get a better look out the front window.

"Looks like new neighbours," Lucas answers, joining his friend and

peering through the window too. "They're moving into the Winchester's old house."

"You mean that weird couple that used to throw golf balls at cars and steal Mike's dad's *Playboys*?" Dustin asks.

Mike turns red and is relieved that El doesn't know what *Playboy* was. The curiosity gets the best of him and he and Eleven go to the window to get a closer look.

"Where do you think they're from?" Mike asks.

"I can't read the license plate..." Lucas squints into the graying front yard.

He and Dustin hop off the couch and go outside. Mike follows with Eleven trailing. Usually, Mike Wheeler couldn't care less about people moving in, but it was something new and normal happening in their small town compared to what's happened in the past.

The four of them watch as a tall man, a woman and two kids climb out of the parked station wagon. One looks about five or six-years-old, he races around up to the front stoop with childish excitement. The other kid looked to be just about their age, maybe a little bit older, taller, and lankier. He looks around nervously until he spots the group looking at him.

Bill swallows and looks back at the kids, standing in an almost perfect line. Obviously, they were curious about the people moving in. He looks away just as Georgie races by.

"George Elmer Denbrough, settle down!" his mother orders. Bill's father, with a box in his hand, unlocks the front door and his wife follows him in.

"Look Bill, kids!" Georgie says excitedly. Before Bill can stop him, his brother races across the cul-de-sac towards the group.

"G-G-GEORGIE! C-Come back!" Bill calls, racing over to grab his brother.

The six-year-old runs up to the group.

"Hi, I'm Georgie," he says cheerfully to the group. "What's your name?"

Everyone is a little shell-shocked by the forwardness of the kid, but decide that he's harmless enough.

"Uh... I'm Dustin, that's Lucas, Mike's over there and that's El... I mean Jane."

"G-Georgie," Bill says, coming over to grab his brother's arm. "S-Sorry if my b-brother is b-bothering you."

"It's okay," Lucas shrugs. The young boy reminds him of his sister Erica, but less annoying.

"I'm Mike, this is Dustin, that's Lucas and this is Jane," Mike says, re-introducing them to the older kid. Bill can see that this Mike, looks a lot like his friend Richie, minus the coke-bottle glasses. It was actually uncanny the way the two looked alike, they could be identical twins. The boy on the far left... Dustin wore a ball cap over what seemed to be an afro of curly hair. Next to him was the Lucas kid, he had a bandana tied around his head and one around his wrist. There was a girl next to Mike, probably more shy than the others because she stood behind Mike as if for protection. She had hair that was about shoulder-length and slightly unruly as if she'd previously had her head shaved. He locks eyes with the girl for a moment before she looks away.

"I'm B-B-Bill," the stuttering preteen says nervously. "Bill Denbrough."

"Where did you guys just move from?"

"D-Derry, Maine," Bill answers.

"Oh, are you guys part of that evacuation project my mom was talking about?" Dustin asks.

Bill nods, trying to guide his brother back to the house.

"S-See you around," Bill says as casually as he can before walking back with Georgie to the house.

"They're nice," Georgie says brightly as he goes inside the house. Bill can still feel the groups eyes on him. He was very nervous about his brother's statement, he wonders if they'll treat him well or like garbage because they were from a different town. He picks up some of the boxes before heading inside. He pauses once to see the girl of the group waving to him. He struggles but waves back.

A/N: Bill and Georgie meet the Party.

3. Chapter 2: Meaning of Love

Chapter 2: Meaning of Love

"So, Derry evacuees are moving in," Dustin says.

"Did they ever say what was wrong with the town?" Lucas asks.

"Either toxicity in the water or tampons backing up the water main," Dustin says.

Mike and Lucas look at him in disgust, but the mention of such products just flies right over Eleven's head.

"What? They are really similar in a lot of ways..."

Mike rolls his eyes.

"Isn't Derry that town where kids would go missing like every other week?" Lucas asks.

"Yeah, I think so," Mike says. "No wonder they wanted to move."

"Like Will?" Eleven asks.

"Yeah, like when Will went missing, but not to some parallel universe populated by Demogorgons," Dustin says.

"And most aren't found alive," Lucas says quietly.

"Like Barb..." Eleven whispers and everyone stops talking.

Suddenly, there's a crackle on Mike's walkie-talkie.

"Yo, loser Lucas," a young female voice says through the speaker. "Mom says to get your behind home before she sends the national guard out after you."

Lucas grabs Mike's walkie-talkie.

"Erica, I swear to god!" he hisses. "You break that thing..."

"Or what? You'll tell your girlfriend about your G.I. Joe collection or that you still sleep with a teddy bear?" she taunts.

"You're dead meat!" Lucas says. He shoves the device back into Mike's hands and goes for his bike parked in the Wheeler driveway.

"Bye guys," he says. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Bye." All three of them say.

"I think my mom is going to want me home too," Dustin says. "To feed that cat of hers while she's at Bingo."

"Bingo?" Eleven asks curiously.

"It's a game," Mike explains. "A game where you can win money and stuff..."

"And stuff..." she nods.

"Anyways, I'll see you tomorrow Mike. Bye El," Dustin says, going after his bicycle.

Eleven waves as Dustin pedals out of the cul-de-sac, leaving the two on their own.

Mike swallows very hard, wondering what to talk to her about. Even though they spent almost every day of the summer together, it was going to be in vain as he had to start school tomorrow. Per the head scientist of DOE's request, El still had to law low for at least another half-year and it didn't help that she was so far behind the other kids and social interactions were still very new to her. She would no doubt be a victim of Troy and James' bullying or maybe some female bullies. She'd be called a freak or worse and because she was so far behind everyone, she'd probably be put in the group with kids with special needs. He'd heard that Chief Hopper was trying to improve her vocabulary with a new word each day and teaching her basic math, but Eleven still struggled. Most wondered if she would ever fit in.

"I'm going to miss you when I'm at school tomorrow," Mike admits.

"Me too," Eleven says, brushing some curls out of her face.

"It's only six hours..." he says.

"Too long," she says.

"I know, but Hopper said that you might be able to join us in the new year. Then we can see each other more."

She smiles. "I'd like that."

"School sucks, you should consider yourself lucky that you don't have to do it yet."

"Sucks..." she chews on the word.

"Is that your new word for the day?"

She smirks and shakes her head. She leans forward and kisses Mike on the lips.

Her lips are soft and smooth, Mike kisses back gently, feeling his heart race and his face flush a bright red. His hands shook behind his back... he cared about her so much. How he was going to miss her tomorrow.

"Kiss..." she says once they break apart. "That's my new word."

"I thought you already knew that word," Mike says, awkwardly.

"It's the only one I think of with you," she grins.

Mike smiles as well, laughing a little bit.

"I want to go to school," Eleven says quietly. "I want to be normal."

"But you're not normal," Mike says. "You're so much better."

El blushes just as headlights hit the two preteens and Hopper's cop car pulls up.

"Do I need to separate you two? Three inches remember?" the cop says sternly from his rolled-down window.

Eleven frowns in panic.

"I thought that only applied to her bedroom door?" Mike questions.

"It applies in public too," the cop mutters. The tension between him and Mike was still very much palpable after the cop seemingly lost his mind over the amount of time the two spent together. He'd even gone so far as to threaten Mike to back off, which of course failed in the long run. The man of the law decides to change the subject. "You ready to go?"

She nods and turns to Mike. She kisses him once more and he pulls her into a long hug.

"Meet us at the playground after school," Mike says to her. "We'll hang out."

"Promise?" she asks.

"Friends don't lie remember?" he says.

Hopper honks the horn impatiently, causing the two of them to break apart.

She smiles and hugs him tightly again before getting into the passenger seat of the car.

"Stay safe Mike," Hopper says, before rolling up the window and beginning to drive away. Eleven waves to Mike until he vanishes from sight.

The two drive in silence for a long while until Jim decides to turn this into a teaching moment, mostly forced by Joyce to prevent both Mike and Eleven from hating him.

"Affection," he says.

She turns to him in confusion.

"Affection, that can be your new word\ for today. It's what you give Mike, it can be a kiss or a hug to anyone you care about. It shows that you like someone and that you care about them and their

feelings. It can be a way of expressing friendship or love."

"Affection..." she chews on the word. "Love, what is love, Hopper?"

"Oh... that's a hard one. I guess it can be a number of things. It can be what two people feel for one another... It can be for a family member or a friend."

"Like you and Sarah?" Jane offers.

"Yes, that's more family love, but there's romantic love too... Like Romeo and Juliet, Cleopatra and Antony, or..."

"Me and Mike?"

Hopper looks at her, surprised by this expression by her. He grips the steering wheel hard and grinds his teeth at this prospect.

"Do you love Mike?" he asks quietly.

Eleven ponders it for a moment.

"What does love feel like?"

"Well, it's different for all people. But if you feel that you can trust the person; that you say anything you want to them, that they will accept you for who you are and never let you go. You feel safe around them. You can have butterflies in your stomach, your face can become red hot, your heart races every time you're near them..." He definitely does not want to bring up the sexual aspect for this 13-year-old who doesn't even know what the Tooth Fairy was. "You can feel the need to protect them, that you would do anything for them, that your life is empty without them. They make you happy and you feel as if you know what life is really all about..."

With each description, Eleven checks off the boxes on this lengthening list. She was sure that what she had with Mike was love. She remembered how much she missed him during the year they were separated, how much it hurt, how happy she was with him now. It must be love.

"I love Mike," she says finally.

Despite the seeming shock of this, the father keeps a reasonably level head. While scared and surprised by this declaration, knowing how young the kids were... he knew that it was likely true. The two of them had young love. He was sure that Eleven and Mike cared for each other quite a lot, it made him happy to see her so happy, but was it, love? It seemed to be, but maybe it wouldn't last. One could never be sure, especially at such a young age. Despite how sure she sounded, Hopper was not sure... at least not yet. He tries to shake the murderous thoughts against Mike from his head.

"I'm sure you do," he says finally, as they pull into the driveway of their cabin out in the woods.

He does want to warn her about declaring such a thing as that could frighten a guy away, but from the way Mike looked at Eleven, he was sure it wouldn't scare the little worm too much.

Jane/Eleven goes up into the house, unlocking the door without a key. Hopper had to remember to tell her that she can't just go unlocking people's doors with her powers whenever she feels like it.

He gets inside, taking off his work boots and putting his hat on the table by the door. He watches as Jane goes right to the kitchen and into the freezer.

"Just one Eggo tonight," he says. "And only a dab a whipped cream, otherwise you won't be able to sleep."

"Why?" she asks.

"Just one and I'll explain why," he says.

Hopper just smiles, he goes in and grabs himself a beer and sits down, waiting for his adopted daughter to join him. He knew he should be sending her to school, to be with kids her own age, but she was like a fragile butterfly or a deer in the woods. She spooked easily, she also wasn't like the other kids... not entirely anyway. She still had a lot to learn. He tries to teach her when he can, but there was only so many hours in a day and Mike and his friends only taught her what they thought was important, which included Dungeons and Dragons and how to burp the alphabet. He grabs the

newspaper as begins looking at the classified ads, thinking that he might want to put something around. Find someone like Nancy Wheeler or a student who'd be willing to understand Eleven's situation and tutor her on academic things.

When she joins him at the table, she begins eating with her hands. He frowns.

"What did I tell you?"

Begrudgingly, she grabs a fork and knife and eats with them. Despite how different she was, kids will be kids, no matter where they come from.

4. Chapter 3: Strangers in a House

Chapter 3: Strangers in a House

Bill brings more boxes inside the empty house, feeling empty himself.

The house looked really old; the wallpaper was rather dilapidated and faded, ugly floral curtains hung across the all the windows, a lot of the furniture was old and ragged, and the hardwood floors squeaked constantly as he walked across it. He carries his things up the staircase, each step creaking so loudly, it would disturb the dust overhead. Bill looks at the narrow hallway, two doors on each side and one at the end of the hall. The first one was the bathroom, small with a window that looked onto the backyard. The tub stood on four legs and the taps were mouldy and dripping. There were several rust spots across the base heater near the toilet. The next door was already open, showing a rather small room with what looked like a canopy draped over the top of the head of the bed. He realized that the room was colder than the rest because the window was open. It blew the white curtain back and forth in the autumn breeze, almost giving the image of a ghost. It had a sort of hazy pink colouring to it, making it more feminine. No doubt this would be Mia's room when she came to stay with them.

At the end of the hall was another bedroom. It was already full of boxes and toys indicating that it would be Georgie's room. It had a bed shoved up against the wall and a rocking chair facing the closet for some strange reason. There were shelves on either side of a window that also looked out into the backyard, with a big oak tree's branches casting shadows all over the room.

To the left of his brother's room was the only one with a queen-sized bed, which meant it was automatically his parent's room. It was a four-poster bed with bars reaching almost to the ceiling. An antique dresser sat in the corner of the room and Bill could see that his dad was struggling to get the closet door open.

So that meant by default, that the bedroom closest to the stairs was to be Big Bill's room. The preteen peeks inside, not quite sure what to make of it. It was just a bit smaller than his room in Derry, with a

bed leaning against another wall. There was a desk to the far left, facing near the window that looked out at the house next door and there was a closet against the back wall. It was a lot like his old room, which made Bill feel a little more comfortable. The one thing that set it apart was the bulletin board next to the light switch. It was covered in newspaper clippings of all different kinds, which felt bizarre to him.

He puts the box on his bed and turns on the light. Apparently, his dad had already got the electricity working. His room had a ceiling fan that shook almost unnervingly above the light. A chain hung down and rattled every time the fan made a full spin.

Knowing that this would drive him crazy, plus summer was ending so it would not be needed to cool him down. Bill tries to stand on the bed and grab for the chain. It was extremely difficult, and he had a hard time not getting dizzy by the blades whipping around in a frenzy. It was disorienting his equilibrium. He grabs the chain, pulling down hard until the fan started to slow down and eventually stop.

Satisfied, the teen begins exploring the room further. He stares at the newspaper clippings. All of them had bizarre headlines.

Hawkins Boy Found Alive

The Boy who Died for a Week

Where is Barbra?

Justice for Barb

Strange Sightings Seen at DOE Facility

Missing Russian Child

DOE Facility Linked to MK Ultra

Strange Beasts Roam Hawkins

All of the articles look rather pathetic, all conspiracy junk about secret government facilities and a couple of them probably talked

about UFOs and Bigfoot. Bill scoffs to himself, never having believed in crazy conspiracies before, that is until he and his friends battled IT. A monster that lurked in the sewers. But despite the menacing presence in Derry, UFOs were still a stretch for him. The only person who would be interested in them is Richie, and that was because of his science-fiction obsession. Bill begins taking all of the scraps of paper down until he hears a thump behind him.

His heart leaps into his throat as he turns to look at his closet. He becomes nervous, scared of something that might be lurking inside. His hands shake, thinking the worst possible thing inside... Had IT followed them from Derry? Could there be a dead body? Someone inside?

Despite his anxiety, he goes towards the closet, afraid, but also curious about what was inside. He knew he couldn't just let whoever or whatever was in there jump out in the middle of the night and kill him. He had to be brave. His hand grips the doorknob. He opens it...

A large bucket of golf balls come pouring out of the closet, raining down in front of him as if it were hail. Bill steps back in surprise but relieved that it wasn't something lurking inside. The tiny things pound and bounce against the floor in a myriad of noises.

His parents and Georgie come in at the sounds and watch as the last of the white balls fall to the floor.

"Are you okay Bill?" his mother asks.

"F-Fine, these just f-fell out."

"The man who lived here before must've liked golf," his father says, carefully manoeuvring around them. "I think this was his office."

Bill and his father get down on their hands and knees and begin picking up the balls and putting them back in their basket.

"A strange place to keep them though," his mother says.

Georgie picks up a ball and begins bouncing it up and down, until it gets away from him and bounces down the stairs, making an ominous rapping noise as it goes.

"I think it's time for someone to go to bed," she says, taking her youngest son's hand and guiding him into his room.

"Night Billy," Georgie says before he's dragged out of sight.

"Night-t Georgie," he says.

Once the golf balls are all picked up, his dad offers to take them down to the basement or garage so there was room for his son's things.

"Think about going to bed soon Billy," his dad says. "You have school in the morning."

"R-Right," Bill nods. "Good night-t Dad."

"Good night Big Billy," his dad says before going down the stairs.

Bill drags over one of the boxes and puts it inside the closet, which is pretty tiny. But it would have to do for now. As he searches for his pyjamas, he sees a note stapled to the back of the closet door. Curious, he rips it from its place.

To whoever finds this note,

What is in this closet are projectiles, very useful in the heat of battle. There is also a radio in the basement that is used for any secret use only. Beware, there are ears everywhere. There are extra supplies with the directions below in case of The Great War. Please do not share them with anyone, also, never turn off the fans in any of the rooms.

E. W.

Bill looks over the directions, it looked like a map to some buried treasure or something. All of this confused him. He looks up at the fan, which had now stopped spinning: Why would anyone want to keep their ceiling fans on? It was a waste of electricity.

Projectiles? Great War? Radio? None of it made any sense. Bill decides that tomorrow he's going to ask his father about the mental states of the previous owners. He crumples up the note and tosses it

into a nearby wastebasket. However, it misses and bounces under the desk. He then takes down all the newspaper clippings, throwing them out too, knowing that he now had the space to put up his art projects and other things.

He didn't think about much else as he got ready for bed. He puts fresh sheets on the bed and climbs in. The mattress is really lumpy and uncomfortable, the bed frame squeaks every time he rolls over. But despite everything, Bill curls up, willing himself to fall asleep. He leaves the door open because he just wasn't comfortable sleeping in complete darkness tonight.

...

"Bill?"

The preteen turns over to see a shadow standing by his bed. He nearly jumps out of his skin in fright until he realizes that it's Georgie.

"What's wrong G-Georgie?" he asks, turning on his light.

"I don't want to sleep in my room."

"W-Why not?"

"There's a monster in there."

"N-No there isn't," Bill says.

"Yes, there is! ... I heard it breathing in the closet. It makes noises Billy."

"Georgie, it was probably the radiator. I-It's an old house t-too and it's new t-to us. It'll make n-noises."

"I still don't want to sleep in there. Can sleep with you tonight?"

"Sure," Bill says, not really in the mood to battle with his brother about the existence of monsters in the middle of the night. He knew they existed, but Derry was so far away now, there's no way IT could've followed them here. Right?

He moves over to make room for his brother. Georgie curls up in bed, clutching his favourite blanket. Once the six-year-old is settled in, Bill shuts his eyes, trying to find sleep again.

He only opens his eyes once after what sounded like heavy breathing coming from down the hall and what he thought was a golf ball roll past his door in the darkness.

5. Chapter 4: The Gang's All Here

Chapter 4: The Gang's All Here

"Bill hurry up you're going to be late." His mother calls from the bottom of the stairs.

"C-Coming," he calls, packing his sketchbook in his bag along with his new school supplies. He hurries down the stairs to the kitchen, where a simple breakfast is waiting for him. Toast since that was the only thing that was hooked up to the house. Georgie sits at the old dining room table eating his jam toast, while their father reads the morning paper while sipping a cup of coffee.

"Hawkins is certainly an interesting town," he muses as Bill takes a seat to eat his dry toast.

"What makes you say that?" his wife asks, as she packs paper bag lunches for her sons.

"Well, it has one of the last remaining national laboratories in North America, which sprung up just after World War Two."

Bill pauses, remembering the newspaper articles that he'd thrown away the night before, several mentioning the same laboratory.

"D-Do they say what they d-do there?" Bill asks.

"Not really, apparently after a nasty chemical leak killed a local teenager and caused strange hallucinations to other residents, it's been closed down and quarantined."

"What are hallucinations?" Georgie asks.

"They're basically images or thoughts that we think we can see but are not there," his father explains, deciding not to go into too much detail with his young son. "Often brought on by different chemicals."

"So that monster in my closet is a hallucination?" the six-year-old asks.

"Georgie there are no monsters in your closet," his mother says firmly. "You're just not used to the house yet."

"But I saw it, Mommy, I did!" he insists.

"There's no such thing as monsters' honey," she sighs.

"Yes, there is, there was one in Derry, the one that lived in the sewer right Bill?"

Bill doesn't know how to respond. His parents look at him, waiting for a response. His ears turn red in embarrassment. He eats more of his toast before saying anything else. There's no point in trying to convince his parents of anything. For some reason, the adults in Derry never saw It, why that was, no one could be sure, but what he and his friends had seen was most definitely a monster.

"T-There was s-something in the s-sewer," he finally manages to say.

"Probably just some animal, many of them get trapped in there," his father says. "Besides, there is something in the sewers, high levels of toxins."

Bill just finishes his toast and gets up. "Come on G-Georgie," he says. "We have to get going."

He grabs his lunch from his mother and goes to get his backpack, sidestepping the mountains of boxes. His little brother follows, suit, ready to start his first day of first grade.

"I got your bikes down from the roof," his father, Zack, calls out.

Their mother presses Bill's hair down flat and kisses each of them. "Please stay safe out there, we don't know what the traffic is like in this town."

"Okay," Bill says.

"Do you know where you're going?" she asks.

"W-We saw the school driving in-n," Bill nods. "I have to g-go meet the others anyway."

"Just be careful," Sharon Denbrough says, as both her sons go for their bikes. She stands on the front porch and waves as the two begin to ride once around the cul-de-sac before heading out towards the open streets.

...

"Nancy!" Mike shouts, pounding on the bathroom door. "Other people have to get ready too."

"Then maybe you should haul your ass out of bed sooner, sucks to be you," she shouts, applying more makeup in front of the bathroom mirror.

"You're just making yourself look uglier," Mike hollers back.

"Shut Up you little...!"

"You two stop fighting," their mother orders. "You're scaring Holly."

Mrs. Wheeler holds her young daughter, who is in a pink dress and had her hair up in pigtails, in preparation for her first day of nursery school.

"Why can't I use your bathroom?" Mike whines.

"Because your father is shaving in there," his mother explains, rolling her eyes. Mike could always tell when his mother was just as annoyed with her husband as she was with her bickering children. She would clench her jaw and grind her teeth, before making herself scarce, which is what she did after making sure Holly was ready.

When Nancy finally does get out of the bathroom, Mike rushes to get ready for school. He grabs his walkie-talkie and shoves a few comic books in his bag before heading downstairs.

Mrs. Wheeler is snapping photographs of her youngest as it's her first official day of school. Mike rolls his eyes and just slips out the door without saying goodbye.

He grabs his bike, while Nancy waits for Johnathan to pick her up.

"You know you could save time by just walking," Mike snickers at prissy Nancy, all dressed up and no place to go.

Nancy flips her brother the bird. She could not wait to move out of this house, go to college and leave all her memories behind.

Mike begins biking along the street, away from his dysfunctional family life and going to school. He was slightly upset that he wouldn't be able to see Eleven, but he tries to remember that he'll see her after school.

Suddenly, a figure darts out of some nearby trees, right in front of Mike's bike. The preteen tries to break hard and steering around the figure, but he ends up tipping his bike sideways and landing on the concrete.

He's about to scream at the person until he sees the familiar brown eyes and hair falling around in loose curls.

She runs over to help him up.

"Geez El, you scared me," he says.

"Sorry, Surprise before school," she says.

"Well, mission accomplished," he says, brushing himself off.

"Can I ride?" she asks.

Mike smiles, his mind flashing back to the times she would cling to his back as they sped through town, mostly to avoid danger, but to have her so close, allowed him to forget everything else.

"Yes," he says. "Hop on."

Eleven climbs onto the back of Mike's bike like she'd done so many times before. The entire group had tried to teach her how to ride a bike over the summer, but she much preferred riding than pedalling.

The two set off down the street again, the cool late summer air blowing in their faces and rusting their hair.

"Where's Hopper?" Mike asks. "I thought he told you to stay home."

"Snuck out," she smirks.

"El, you are bad," he smiles.

"Bitchin'" she smiles to herself, letting the wind clear her head.

...

"Hey, if it isn't Big Bill," a familiar and obnoxious voice calls as Bill and Georgie pull into the schoolyard.

With his big glasses practically hanging on the edge of his nose, Richie Tozier sits, leaning against his bike at the edge of the schoolyard, waiting for his friend.

"H-How are you Richie?" Bill asks as the three boys walk their bikes across the grass. "What's y-your house like?"

"Stinks like Eddie's Mom's underwear mixed with decaying poison sumac, what do you think?"

Bill forces a smile but feels really awkward as he sees the schoolyard in front of them. Many Hawkins kids were already running around, greeting their friends to talk about their summers. Several other kids ride their bikes or skateboards around on the pavement to pass the time while waiting for the bell to ring. The preteen looks for the rest of his friends, or anyone friendly. He notices a couple of girls whispering and pointing to the group, likely talking about who the hell they were.

Bill's heart flutters and he smiles when he sees the freckled and bright face of Beverly Marsh coming over to meet them. He manages to smile. She looked more beautiful than ever, her hair starting to grow back in, giving her a curly, shoulder-length style. She had more freckles due to being out in the sun in the summer. But what made her stand out the most was how relaxed and happy she was. Her new foster family was fantastic, giving her the love and respect she deserved. She no longer had to look over her shoulder out of fear of her father and his abusive ways.

"H-Hi," Bill says.

"Hi guys, hi Georgie," she says, smiling down at the youngest.

Georgie suddenly becomes shy and looks down at the ground, stepping backwards as if to avoid her.

"Oooh, the first time she's been rejected by a guy," Richie snorts.

Bev slugs him in the shoulder in frustration. At this new school, she wanted to shed her previous reputation, start fresh and try to be normal.

"D-Don't worry about him," Bill says. "G-Georgie is j-just nervous."

"Aren't we all?" Beverly says, adjusting her backpack.

Eventually, Stan Uris comes to join the group, his Yamika pressing down his long curls. He smiles at the others and stands awkwardly with the group.

"Hey, if it isn't Rabbi Stan the Man," Richie says.

"S-Shut up, Richie!"

"How are you, Stan?" Bev asks.

"Pretty good, my dad paid more attention to cleaning up the synagogue to his standards than worrying about the house."

"Is it a nice place?" she asks.

"It's a dump," Richie cuts in. "I know that because I saw it. It's right next to the junkyard."

The group hears another bike come up behind him and the familiar sound of the puffer. Eddie Kaspbrak walks up with his usual fanny pack chock full of his usual medications. He sprays some chemicals into his mouth before parking his bike.

"Well if it isn't Wheezenhiemer himself," Richie teases.

"Shut the f*** up Richie," Eddie says.

"Hey, language!" Bill insists, nodding to Georgie.

"Ooh, someone's in a bad mood," Bev notices.

"My mom wouldn't leave me alone this morning. She had to make sure I had sunscreen, my inhaler, my allergy medication, anti-tic lotion and pepper spray."

"W-Why w-would you need pepper spray?" Bill asks.

"In case I run into any rapists or muggers," the shortest kid in the group mutters.

"Again!" Bill says. He turns to his younger brother. "H-Hey Georgie, why don't you g-go and lock your bike up, I'll be over s-soon."

The six-year-old just nods and then goes over to the bike racks. Ben Hanscom comes up to join the group too.

"Hey guys," he says, he only briefly locks eyes with Beverly before blushing and looking away. "Have you guys seen the library of the school, it looks great."

"Who cares about the library, what about the girl's changeroom, does it have a window?"

Everyone in the group rolls their eyes.

"I also got all our time schedules and maps of the school," Ben says, handing the sheets of paper out to everyone. The group knew that they could always rely on Ben to be organized and prepared.

"Okay, who else has Math with Mrs. Wilson?" Stan asks.

"I d-do," Bill says.

...

Meanwhile, Mike parks his bike on the bike rack and waits for his friends. He had to say goodbye to Eleven at the edge of school property and then went to wait for the rest of the party.

He notices the little boy that he'd met the other night, the ones who'd moved into the Winchester's old house struggling to lock his bike.

"Need a hand?" Mike asks, leaning down to help him.

Georgie, while very shy, he manages to smile as a thank you.

"Mike!" he says, remembering the names from last night.

"Yeah that's me, and your Georgie right?"

The kid nods proudly. "Where's Jane?"

Mike's about to ask who that was but remembers El's new identity. "She's at home, she's homeschooled," he answers.

The two go into an awkward silence until Dustin Henderson pulls up on his bike. "Hey, buddy. Isn't that the pipsqueak from last night?" spraying spit with the last 's'.

Georgie frowns and turns a bit red before walking back towards his brother.

Mike elbows Dustin.

"What?"

"Way to insult the kid, give him a reputation before he even starts going to school here."

"Okay, sorry," Dustin mutters.

Both boys look over at the group of Derry kids that stand near the tetherball pole.

Lucas Sinclair rides up with Max Mayfield not too far behind.

"What up?" she asks the group.

Mike and Dustin turn back to their friends.

"How do we know they didn't bring some kind of radioactive shit from their town?" Dustin asks.

"It was toxins in the water, not a nuclear blast stupid," Lucas mutters.

"Well, the girl looks a lot like you Max," Mike points out.

The zoomer rolls her eyes, knowing that the girl would never be as cool as she was. "Well the dweeb in the glasses looks a lot like you," she adds.

"The tall dude with the little brother has a stutter," Dustin adds, adjusting his ball cap.

"And it looks like one of them is Jewish," Lucas observing the Yamika.

"On a scale of one to ten, how weird do you think they are?" Dustin asks.

The rest of the group look at him with disgust and roll their eyes.

Just then Will Byers pulls up on his bike.

"Hey guys," he says. "What's up?"

"Just talking about the new Derry kids," Lucas explains. Will adjusts his view in order to see the group better.

"Are they nice?" Will asks.

"They seem to be," Mike answers.

"Hope they're not just a bunch of losers," Max mutters to herself as the bell rings, indicating the beginning of school.

6. Chapter 5: Curiosity Voyage

Chapter 5: Curiosity Voyage

"All right everyone, welcome back to another year at sea on our curiosity voyage," Mr. Clarke announces to the classroom of angsty adolescents. Most were chatting about their summers until the biology teacher clears his throat. The new kids from Derry wait next to the door with their administration slips in hand. "But, before we set sail once again, I'd like to introduce you to a few new passengers who've come all the way from Derry, Maine to join us on our journey. I have Bill Denbrough,"

The skinny and stuttering teen walks to the front of the room, his knees buckling slightly at being introduced in front of a bunch of strangers. He swallows hard, clinging to his books rather tightly.

"H-Hi," is all the kid can manage to get out.

A couple kids in the back snicker slightly at Bill's stuttering, but Mr. Clarke frowns at them sternly.

"Welcome aboard Mr. Denbrough, I hope you are ready for the voyage of a lifetime. Now, sir, you can take a seat beside Max over there."

Bill nods and quickly finds his way to his seat. He's glad he's not at the front, but that doesn't stop Max from looking at him skeptically. Big Bill does his best to ignore the stares.

"Edward Kaspbrak,"

The shortest of the Losers club steps forward, a few more kids snicker at the fanny pack around his waist.

"You can call me Eddie, also is your room hypo allogenic vents because I have asthma and the dust and mould that accumulates in such places are extremely hazardous to my throat, causing unwanted infection and I shouldn't sit near a window because my mom doesn't want me exposed to the sun and..."

Mr. Clarke cuts the boy off. "It's all okay Eddie, to avoid the dust and sun, why don't you sit behind Dustin Henderson right there in the middle of the classroom?"

The curly haired kid smirks as the puny kid sits behind him, Eddie still shaking slightly. He then takes out his inhaler and squirts a dose of medicine into his mouth. The girl sitting behind him pops her gum loudly as if to taunt the germaphobe.

"Then we have Benjamin Hanscom, welcome."

"Thank you, Mr. Clarke," Ben says cheerfully. "I hope to learn a lot in this class."

"An enthusiastic passenger, well Ben I hope you learn a lot too."

"Could you also tell me about some of the extra-curriculars available?"

"I certainly will, but after class, if that's okay Mr. Hanscom. Now can you please take a seat over in front of Troy over there?"

Ben nods and then goes to sit in his seat. Mike and Lucas both observe the grin that stretches across Troy's face... he now had someone new to torment.

"This isn't going to end well," Mike hisses to his friend.

Ben opens his books and prepares for the lesson, completely oblivious to the bully who would likely give him a hard time the second Mr. Clarke turned his back.

"And finally, we have Miss Beverly Marsh, welcome to our voyage, Miss Marsh."

"Thank you," Beverly says warmly with a slightly reluctant smile.

"Now Beverly, I'd like you to take a seat in front of Max there, just behind Will,"

"Okay, thank you."

The fiery redhead sits down, bringing her shoulder bag down next to her. She sits in front of another equally fierce redhead. Will can't help but turn back to look at the pretty freckled face that has just sat behind him. Beverly gives him a warm smile and he nervously returns it.

"All right, now that introductions are out of the way, let's weigh our anchor and I will charter our course onwards into the wonderful world of Biology and Earth Science. Now this year I'd like to put more emphasis in the world below our feet; whether we go from the green grass outside to the hot molten core at the centre of the Earth, we are going to explore it all..."

As Mr. Clarke carries on, the kids from Hawkins still stare at the kids from Derry. Some with annoyance, others with curiosity and others, with malice in their thoughts.

The girl behind Eddie begins to pop her gum a little bit louder than before and chewing it harder as if to scare the little nerd in front of her. Eddie does his best to ignore the sounds, pay attention to the teacher, but he keeps thinking about the gooey globs of spit that were likely being projected his way with each pop. Ben is eagerly taking notes already, trying to learn everything he can about the science they would be learning about. The overweight kid of the Losers Club doesn't notice that Troy has begun using the sharp end of his math compass to carve *Run Piggy Run* into the back of his chair. Max is staring daggers at Beverly, seemingly because she's attracted the attention of all the other boys, including Lucas. She was a pretty looking redheaded girl and from what they could tell, she was sweet. Sickeningly sweet and she was new to the school... could this girl take away the attention and notoriety she'd gained? Deciding to focus on something else, Max's eyes wander to the other Derry kid sitting next to her. She can see how nervous and twitchy this guy is. She doesn't doubt that he has a stutter, even with one word she could tell the kid was all kinds of nervous. Her eyes go to what Bill seems to be drawing in his notebook.

She can see a picture slowly take form as his hand flies over the page in careful, but precise strokes. She notices a face, then a body and eventually more clear details. The kid was drawing Mr. Clarke, and it was a damned good drawing of him as well. Max can't help but

become curious if this kid is some kind of artist, he could probably draw portraits and make a good living that way.

As the class carries on, Will looks at his friends and then at Beverly several times. He thinks she's pretty, but clearly, all the other boys do too. At one point, she looks at Dustin and he gives her his signature purr and winks at her too. She gives a sort of awkward smile to him, most likely trying to be polite. Bev did find it a little funny, but mostly weird.

Ben frowns, suddenly distracted from the lesson by the curly-haired kid in the baseball cap suddenly trying to hit on Beverly with some weird purring noise he makes with the front of his teeth. He still had a desperate crush on her, ever since he'd written her that poem about January embers. He wasn't sure if she'd figured it out that it was him and he kind of felt upset that she hadn't said anything. He wants to have the courage to talk to her more, but he always loses his nerve whenever she smiles at him. He ends up turning red and looking like a tomato. Ben was close to giving up considering Bev seemed to like Bill more than him.

While Ben is annoyed with Dustin, Mike is annoyed with Troy, knowing what the douche bag would likely do to the poor kids. The ones that were weaker and weirder than the others. While he would feel bad for them, it meant that maybe Troy and James would stop picking on him and his friends. His mind also goes back to El, he can't stop thinking about her and he missed seeing her every day. He wished that time would go faster so he could see her after school. He also wished that she was in school with them and really become one of the party and maybe the A.V. club.

When the bell rings, Mr. Clarke calls the Derry students over.

"Welcome to our class, now here is a list of extra-curriculars Mr. Hanscom requested." He hands the photocopied sheets to each of them. "There are many opportunities for all of you to become involved, but I will be a little biased and highly recommend the A.V. club. We have all the new state-of-the-art equipment so if any of you are interested in audio and visual equipment, just come to my classroom after school and I'll introduce you to the entire crew."

Meanwhile, the party stands out in the hallway, watching the Derry kids.

"I think the red-headed chick dug me," Dustin smirks.

"I'm sure she was creeped out," Max scoffs. "The purring thing doesn't work."

"Come on, no one can resist these pearls," and he purrs again. "It worked on you, didn't they?"

Max rolls her eyes.

"It doesn't work," Lucas insists, supporting his girlfriend's point.

"But she smiled."

"She was probably just being polite," Mike insists.

"Just you guys wait, I'm going to have her in my arms before you know it," the curly-haired kid grins stupidly.

"They seem nice," Will adds. "Maybe they'll join the A.V. club."

"We could use a few more members," Lucas agrees.

"We already have enough for our party," Mike says sternly.

"Not everyone in the club has to be part of our party Mike," Will says. "They can just be fellow members."

"Besides, if we do get more members, Mr. Clarke will get more funding and that means better equipment."

"Especially after what Dart did last year and El the year before," Dustin agrees.

The group goes into silence as the kids from Derry come out of the biology classroom, looking at their maps, trying to find their next class.

"I hope I have the kid with asthma in gym," Dustin smiles. "I want to see how that will go. If he starts a fight with Mr. Williams, that

would be the best and we can get out of dodgeball."

Mike elbows his friend. "Let's go."

As the Hawkins kids walk away, their eyes still join the many other kids watching the new students try to navigate the small town middle school.

Max had basically summed up all the Derry kids in one go.

The germaphobe dweeb,

the suck-up nerd,

the basic pretty girl,

and the tortured stuttering artist.

7. Chapter 6: Mix-Up

Chapter 6: Mixed-Up

A/N: Warning, language.

El watches the schoolyard from behind the chain-link fence. She's checked the watch that Hopper had given her, it was almost time for the lunch break and soon the empty yard would be filled with students. She knew she was pushing the rules by sneaking out to find Mike again, but it just wasn't fair that she had to wait six hours to see him again. While Hopper had become reasonable with letting her walk-through town more and more, he always reminded her not to be stupid and be aware of her surroundings. This was why Jane had taken to cutting through the forest to get around so no one would see her.

When the sound of the bell echoes across the courtyard, Eleven's heart races and she smiles, knowing exactly where the party ate every day. She walks along the back fence, going near the shed behind the baseball diamond and near the pavement, where they group liked to eat and it allowed Max to skateboard around.

Her heart skips a beat when she sees the slightly lengthy dark hair of Mike. His back is to the fence and he's eating his sandwich while waiting for everyone else. Except he's in a different spot, much closer to the soccer field instead of the baseball diamond. Maybe he's trying to change it up a bit. The other thing she notices is that he's not wearing the same jacket that he was this morning... that shouldn't be concerning, he might've borrowed someone else's because it got dirty or something.

Feeling a bit playful, El decides to surprise Mike. She quiets her steps, easy enough considering she'd had to learn such practices when out in Hopper's cabin. The smile grows on her face as she reaches out and taps him on the shoulder.

"Mike," she says in a low voice.

However, the boy who turns around is not her boyfriend. He has the

exact same hair colour and a similar looking face, but he wears very big glasses that magnify his dark brown eyes. The guy throws his sandwich in the air in fear and jumps back up after seeing the pale face staring at him through the fence.

"What the fuck?!" he screeches. He steps back. "Don't ever sneak up on a guy like that!"

Different voice too.

El immediately begins to shrink away, becoming very afraid of this loud, Mike-looking boy.

"Hey, look I'm sorry I yelled at you, but you scared me so bad I almost crapped myself."

Eleven still begins to back away from the fence, ready to go back home again since Mike wasn't here. She's worried she's missed her chance.

Richie stands at the fence, peering at this girl. She looked as scared as he did, maybe more so. She was a pretty looking girl, with curly dark hair and wide curious eyes. She wore a pair of overalls and a dark shirt underneath, she could practically blend into her surroundings if she wanted to, which she just might at this point.

"Mike?" Eleven ventures, even though she knows it's not him.

"No sorry, I'm not Mike. The name's Richie. Richie Tozier. Do I look like this Mike? Is he better looking than me?"

Jane frowns and raises her eyebrow cautiously. This loud-mouthed boy is not her favourite person at the moment.

"It's a joke," Richie says, adjusting his glasses. "I just make up shit to make people laugh at me. Here watch this..." The bespectacled member of the Loser's club then goes into a five-minute routine involving two British guys and a Jamaican man. While Jane feels a bit off-put by his excessive energy, she does enjoy the funny voices he does so much that she manages to crack a smile. He reminds her a bit of Dustin with his joking nature. Once Richie sees her grin, he stops his performance and points through the fence at her. "See that's what

I like to do, make people laugh."

"Funny," she says with more of a smile. She then gets slightly panicked when she sees more people coming towards Not-Mike. She begins to back away into the wooded area.

"That's exactly what I do, but hey I've got more if... hey, hey where are you going? I didn't get to do my Jack Nicholson. I do a great bit from *The Shining*... Come on..." Richie sighs in defeat. "Everyone's a fucking critic," he mutters to himself when he turns to see his friends approaching with their lunch bags.

"Hey Richie, w-who were you talking to?" Bill asks as he and the rest of the Loser's club all come over to sit on the grass and eat.

"There was some chick on the other side of the fence. She scared the crap out of me and called me Mike and then began to run as if I was Freddy Krueger holding a severed head. I got her to smile though before she ran away. She's a bit weird, spooks easily."

"Wonder what she's doing on that side of the fence," Beverly wonders aloud as she digs out her egg salad sandwich.

"She's probably homeschooled like our Mike is," Stan says as the group all sit on the grass under the shade of the tree to eat.

"Bit weird if you ask me," Eddie says, taking a puff of his inhaler before starting on his whole-grain sandwich.

"Nobody did," Richie smirks, before picking up his sandwich from the dirt and begins eating it again.

Eddie's face contorts in horror. "Do you not know where that's been? Someone could have taken a piss here and you're now eating from the dirt that..."

"Okay Eddie," Beverly cuts him off, not wanting to hear about germs and other gross stuff while they're eating. "We get the idea."

"So. How were everyone's first few periods, pardon the pun Bev, did you spend the whole time in the bathroom" Richie says, giving her a wink.

She rolls her eyes and flips him the bird.

"Beep, beep Richie," Stan snaps.

"I really like this school," Ben pipes up. "Their curriculum is so different from ours and I've already started checking out books about the history of this place."

The group roll their eyes as Ben pulls out a series of books that he's already borrowed from the library.

"Did you know there's a government laboratory on the far side of town?"

Richie pretends to start snoring, trying to shut up the nerd of the group.

"W-What about you B-Beverly? Do you like it-t here?" Bill asks.

"I do, I love walking down the halls without someone calling me Beverly or a slut every five minutes."

"It's definitely different," Stan agrees. "I really like the math teacher we have, Mr. Troller. He's really trying to make it more fun for us."

"Stan, have you lost your mind? Math can never be fun..."

"Just shut up Richie!" Stan barks.

"Whoa settle down Stan the Man," Richie says, going after his bagged chips. The goof of the group then smirks. "Having trouble getting girls to notice you?"

Stan just goes back to eating, having enough of Richie's bits.

"I really think the classrooms should be cleaner and of course the science teacher has to sit me in front of someone who chews gum. You know how unsanitary it is, how much spit flies out of your mouth after you blow a bubble and let it pop?" Eddie asks, his friends

"I like the science teacher Mr. Clarke," Bev says. "He really tries to make it interesting."

"Are you guys going to sign up for A.V. Club?" Ben asks. "I really want to see this new equipment they have."

"Nerd alert," Richie mutters before throwing a few chips at Eddie to annoy him.

"Knock it off Einstein," Eddie grumbles, trying to eat his apple.

Suddenly, a soccer ball comes flying off the field and whacks Richie in the head, knocking his glasses off and crushing the rest of Eddie's lunch. The entire group leans in to help their friend find his glasses as a couple of big looking kids begin walking over to them, big smirks on their faces.

"Well if it isn't Frog Face and looks like he got lenses," the dark-haired bully taunts, laughing as he goes to pick up his soccer ball. He makes sure to stomp on Eddie's lunch more and takes up the dweeb's inhaler to tease him. He tosses the inhaler to his long-haired buddy, who holds it out of Eddie's reach. "What's the deal Four-Eyes? Your freak-a-zoid girlfriend not here to protect you now?"

The entire group of boys behind the bullies begin to laugh as the Loser's Club slowly stand up, Richie holding his head.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Richie barks.

"Don't play dumb Wheeler," the lighter-haired bully smirks, pushing Eddie away as he attempts to get his inhaler back.

"Is this entire town populated by shit-heads?" Richie snaps back.

The dark-haired bully bops the ball off of the nerd's head again, causing his glasses to break. Bill tries to help his friend but then goes to standby Beverly, who's ready to fight.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" Beverly barks, walking towards the group of boys.

"Aw, and another girl's here to defend you, how sweet, you must be from Derry," the bully says.

"Yeah, we are and we don't like being treated like shit," the fierce

redhead barks, her hands clenching into fists.

"Why? Isn't that what's clogging your sewers right now?" the light-haired bully snickers and the rest of the group from the soccer field also laughs.

"Y-you want to be able t-to see through both eyes?" Bill asks, trying to be threatening, but the group just laughs at his stutter.

"Aw, we got the ginger, the stuttering robot, the wheezer, the four-eyes, afro dweeb, and the pig... What a bunch of losers..."

There's more laughter, that's when Beverly slugs the lead bully in the eye. He stumbles back into his friends, holding his eyes.

"You want to fucking go princess?" he snarls, dropping the soccer ball, ready to fight back. He'd been humiliated by a girl once before, and it would not happen again.

The Loser's Club stands ready to fight, they'd fought Bower's gang before and they were worse than these jerks, but the problem was, they are outnumbered.

"Yeah," Bev snarls, her fists still clenched.

"This will be so easy," the light-haired bully says. "There are nine of us and six of you losers. I seriously doubt wheezy here can even throw a punch. This should be over fast. Just so you know, I'm not above hitting girls."

"You should be," a voice calls from behind the Loser's Club. A kid who looks a lot like Richie walks over with an array of friends following him. None of them look particularly threatening but are angry enough to help the new kids. "Although it's clear there are more girls a lot tougher than you."

"Okay Losers, bring it on."

8. Chapter 7: The Club and Party

Chapter 7: The Club and Party

Eleven backs into the wooded area. The boy who was not Mike did seem funny enough to make her smile, a lot like the way Dustin jokes around, but she wanted to find the real Mike, her boyfriend. She walks through the trees away from the boy and goes to where the group usually sits.

Sure enough, Jane recognizes Will's signature bob of hair as he sits against the fence, searching through his lunch for his sandwich. She quietly goes up to the fence and taps Will on the shoulder.

The poor boy jumps in fright but then relaxes a bit when he realizes who it is.

"El?" he says. "What are you doing here?"

"I was bored so I came to see Mike," she explains.

"But don't you remember Hopper's rules," the shier boy asks.

"Yes, don't be stupid and I'm not," she says confidently.

"Well, Mike will be here in a minute. I think Hopper just doesn't want you to get caught by someone,"

"I'm not afraid," she says confidently.

"Famous last words," Will mutters to himself as he digs out his sandwich and begins to eat. Peanut butter with banana slices on top, a new favourite of his. He chews a couple of bites and then he doesn't feel hungry anymore. He forces himself to swallow the bites he'd already taken but then puts it away. His stomach seems to protest the new favourite type of sandwich. He shoves the rest of it back in the bag and then goes for the apple. He's taking a few bites when Lucas, Dustin, and Mike arrive.

Mike's eyes go wide as soon as he sees who's behind the fence.

"El?!" he gasps suddenly. He rushes to the fence to get a closer look. He also checks behind him to make sure no one else can see her.

"Hi Mike," she says with a grin, her eyes lighting up at seeing her boyfriend again.

"I thought Hopper said you couldn't be around the school,"

"I want to see you," she admits. She reaches through the fence and grabs his hand. Both of them enjoy the warmth of joining hands together.

"That's really sweet, but you have to be careful that you don't get caught,"

"I'm not afraid," she insists, giving a smile of confidence.

"She'll be fine Mike," Lucas says. "As long as she doesn't come onto the property, she won't get in trouble. Besides, we all know El can take care of herself."

The girl smiles confidently, glad that Lucas is on her side. Mike just smiles, happy to see his girlfriend.

Will chews a few more bites of his apple but then frowns again. For some reason, it tastes bitter all of a sudden, even sour. Maybe the apple has gone bad, but that doesn't make much sense. He tosses the half-eaten thing into the dirt by the baseball diamond storage shed.

"What's wrong Will?" Lucas asks.

"Not hungry I guess," he shrugs.

"Do have anything with sugar in it?" Dustin asks. "I will trade you for it."

Will just tosses his paper bag lunch to his friend. "Help yourself."

As Dustin searches through Will's lunch, Max rides up on her board.

"What up nerds?" she teases, as she hops off her board and drags it across the grass towards the group. Her eyes go wide when she's

Eleven on the other side of the fence. "What's going on El? Why are you here?"

"I want to see Mike," she explains as Mike sits next to the fence and she sits parallel to him on the opposite side of the chain-link. He offers her some goldfish crackers from his lunch, considering she didn't bring one, obviously not thinking ahead about eating something.

"So, did you guys have any more of the Derry kids in your classes?" Dustin asks, digging into his pudding cup, licking the chocolate from the side of his face. "I didn't get the kid with asthma in my gym class, which is kind of a bummer, but the kid who I think is Jewish is in my math class with Mr. Troller."

"I've got the bigger nerdy kid in History," Lucas says, chewing on some celery sticks. "I have never seen someone raise their hand so much in one period. He wanted to know everything about Hawkins, even though we're learning about the Civil War."

"I've got the ginger girl in English," Max snorts, not wanting to elaborate any further. The girl was too pretty for her own good.

"You mean Beverly Marsh?" Dustin says. "Man is she hot..."

"Dream on, Dust," Mike says. "She's not interested."

"I don't think redheads really like you, Dustin," Will smirks and Max has to smile as well.

"Shut up Will," Dustin says. "You guys will see. She won't be able to resist my charms or my pearls." He then purrs again, making the whole group roll their eyes.

"Did you guys notice that the kid with big glasses looks a lot like Mike?" Will asks. "He was in my English class."

"Your brother from another mother," Dustin teases, digging out the chips from his lunch bag.

"He's much more dweebish looking than you are," Max continues with the mocking of Wheeler, and Mike flips her the bird.

Suddenly, a familiar voice calls out.

"Well if it isn't Frog Face and looks like he got lenses,"

Mike winces recognizing Troy's stupid nickname for him. The entire group looks around, looking for the aggressor, but they don't see him. They're about ready to stand up and move due to his obnoxious taunts, but part of them are hoping the sight of El would scare him away. After all, she had broken his arm the last time he'd bullied them. One would think that he would have learned his lesson. Except... Mike didn't wear lenses.

Then the group hears James' voice.

"Don't play dumb Wheeler,"

"Are we hallucinating or have Troy and James become ghosts?" Dustin asks in confusion, still looking around.

Lucas is the first to get up and peers around the shed of baseball supplies. He sees a bunch of kids going toward the far side of the fence. The entire group gets up to follow him and look down towards the soccer field where the voices are coming from. Eleven investigates from the other side and notices that the jerks are picking on Not-Mike.

"Mouth breathers," she says.

"Shit, Troy and James are picking on the Derry kids," Dustin says.

They can see the red-headed girl standing firmly against the bullies. They watch as Troy bounces a soccer ball off the kid who looks like Mike's face, breaking his glasses in the process.

"Should we help them?" Will asks.

"Let's not and say we did," Dustin swallows, not really wanting to face off with Troy, especially after he'd threatened to cut out his baby teeth unless Mike jumped off a cliff at the quarry.

Just then, the Beverly girl punches Troy in the face.

"Oh man," Dustin laughs, loving that things are about to get interesting. "I think they've got this..."

"Guess again man," Lucas says, looking to see a bunch of other kids, likely James and Troy's lackeys have formed behind the group. There are only six Derry kids versus the nine jerks.

Mike looks over at Eleven, he can tell she's ready to fight. He knows he has to protect her cover or face the wrath of Hopper. The two of them lock eyes for a moment and he suddenly realizes that she won't have to fight. He signals for her to follow him. He then goes towards the coming fight.

"Mike, what the hell are you...?" Dustin gasps. "He's going to get his ass kicked!"

"Well, then let's go help him," Max says with determination, she's faced bullies much bigger and more violent than these guys.

"Max what...?" Dustin says, not liking where this is going.

Lucas is panicking slightly, he impulsively follows Max, wanting to talk her out of fighting. Will reluctantly goes too, deciding to do the right thing and stand up for the Derry kids, leaving Dustin still peering at the scene from behind the shed.

"Damn it, you guys!" he mutters and goes to join them.

More students are beginning to gather around, circling the group in anticipation of an epic looking fight.

Mike is using all his courage to go towards the jerks he has to call classmates. He hears James taunting the Derry group.

"This will be so easy," he says. "There are nine of us and six of you losers. This should be over fast. Just so you know, I'm not above hitting girls."

"You should be," Mike says, finally having caught up to the group. He sucks in a deep breath, trying to sound tougher. The redheaded girl looks at Mike and then at the kid who is exactly like him, the resemblance is uncanny. The bigger kid and the skinny one with a

stutter stand with their fists raised for the fight. "Although it's clear there are more girls a lot tougher than you."

"Okay, Losers, bring it on," James says, his hands up, ready to twist Wheeler's scrawny neck.

"Look who's come to join the pummelling, the real Frog Face," Troy says, wiping any sweat from his face. His eye is beginning to swell where Beverly had punched him, but this was just getting interesting. He then notices the rest of the nerd group coming over. "And it's the ginger coming in second, Zombie Boy, Midnight and Toothless, can this get any better?" The kid laughs happily, knowing he's going to enjoy every minute of this. "Where's your weirdo girlfriend? Go back to the freak show where she belongs."

Mike swallows his anger by biting his lip to the point that it could bleed, wanting to blacken Troy's other eye for that comment, but he clenches his fists and turns up to face the mouth breather.

"You really want to know the answer to that question," he challenges. "After what happened the last time?"

The colour drains from Troy's face, knowing exactly what Mike is talking about. There is a quiver in his stance, unsure of how to proceed.

Mike turns to look on the other side of the fence, sure enough, El is standing there at a distance, a dark menacing glare in them. He gives her a slight nod, she takes another step back and then concentrates.

Just then, the fence begins to rattle violently, as if some violent creature wants to get through. The trees in the wooded area also begin to shake erratically, even though there is no wind blowing. The sound of the metal and the tree shaking catches everyone's attention and Troy and James look up for the source of it. Both of their eyes go wide after what they see just beyond the tree line. Mike, Dustin, Will, Lucas, and Max all smile knowing exactly what this meant, and they know this will be over very soon.

Leaves and dust begin to pick up beyond the school's boundaries, causing confusion amongst the students as they look in different

directions, but do not notice Eleven in the shadows. However, Bill, Beverly, Stan, Ben, Eddie, and Richie also look towards the source of the sound, or in Richie's case squints. They can see the girl, and she does look angry. Bill recognizes her from the night before, she no longer looks shy or scared, in fact, she looks extremely tough and angry. The fence continues to rattle, the metallic jangling as if to taunt the group of mouth breathers, and then Troy and James lose all their nerve and runoff in the direction of the school. James drops Eddie's inhaler as they go. The shortest of the Loser's club immediately dives down into the grass to get it. The other lackeys that were hanging out with the bullies look at each other in confusion, but now that the Derry kids and this new group have seemingly banded together, they are outnumbered. With a deep sigh and some glares at the meek-looking pack, they walk away too.

Several of the students who had gathered to watch the fight try to catch a glimpse of whatever scared the bullies away, but it has seemingly vanished by then. Confused, they begin to disperse and whisper amongst each other about what the hell just happened. Once the audience is gone, everyone relaxes just enough, and Beverly lowers her fists. Ben, Eddie, and Stan go to help Richie find any remains of his glasses. Bill swallows hard, slightly afraid of what just happened. He swore he saw that girl... Jane, he thinks that's what her name was and she looked like she was causing everything. He ventures a glance at Bev and she nods, knowing she saw the same thing. Mike and the rest of the party smile at each other and get ready to go back to their lunches.

Beverly turns to Mike.

"Uh, thanks for the help,"

"No problem," he shrugs, trying to act like it was no big deal.

"Did anyone just see what happened?" Richie asks. "How the fuck did that happen?"

"Just... just shut up Richie," Eddie snaps, his voice cracking slightly. He too had seen the girl and he is now very afraid about what she might do next.

"Anything for you, Doll," Dustin grins, showing off his teeth to her.
"That was awesome the way you punched Troy like that!"

Beverly smiles and shrugs, again acting like it was not really a tough move, she'd fought a hell of a lot worse than a couple of jerks who thought they were tough.

"T-Thanks for having our backs," Bill says, looking at all the kids' faces.

"It's no big deal," Lucas says. "We know what it's like to get picked on by James and Troy,"

"They're nothing but a couple of assholes... they should know when they're beaten," Ben mutters.

The instigator of the attack listens from behind a nearby tree, wishing she could get closer and meet the others but knows the kind of risk that was involved with showing her powers.

"Mouth breathers," she mutters to herself quietly.

A/N: Special thanks to Star2134, Random and the Guest reviews. I love that you guys love this story. Please share it with your friends and keep reviewing.

9. Chapter 8: Hawkins

Chapter 8: Hawkins

"T-That was weird, w-wasn't it?" Bill asks as the Losers club sits at the local playground next to the school after the bell had rung.

The rest of the school day went by pretty smoothly after the bullies had been scared off by some unseen force and a girl on the other side of the chain-link fence. Beverly was let off with a warning for punching one of the jerks in the face since it was her first day at school. She was also told that fighting would not be tolerated at Hawkins Middle School. This seemed rather hypocritical considering students of the said middle school had started everything in the first place. She simply nodded and said that she would behave before thanking the office for giving her a second chance and for not calling her foster family. But still, there was a lot of what happened that still plagued the group. What they had seen defied all kinds of explanation and considering that they'd battled a shape-shifting sewer clown last summer, that was saying a lot. Now, they waited on Ben to get out of signing up for a bunch of clubs, none of the extracurriculars being offered seemed to interest the rest of the group.

Bill continues to push his little brother on one of the swings while Eddie sat on the other one. Stan sat on one of the platforms that led up to the rest of the play structure and Richie sat backwards at the entrance to a metal slide. Beverly sat on the monkey bars, allowing her feet to dangle over.

"Dude, it was the weirdest thing I've ever seen," Stan says, still staring out to where they had seen that girl. He looks more haunted than the rest of the group.

"Seriously?" Richie questions. "The weirdest thing you've ever seen?"

"Just shut up Richie," Stan snaps and turns around to face the rest of his friends.

"G-Good, it w-wasn't just me then," the stammering leader of the

group says.

"Where the hell did that girl come from anyways?" Eddie asks.

"Maybe she's homeschooled," Beverly suggests.

"Don't understand why if there's a perfectly good school right here," Stan points out.

"She did come near me though," Richie explains.

"What? When?" Eddie demands.

"Before you dorks came to join me for lunch, I was sitting with my back to the fence and she came and tapped me on the shoulder, calling me Mike. Apparently, I look just like him, but more handsome of course."

The group rolled their eyes in annoyance.

"Focus Richie Rich," Eddie says. "Did she say anything else?"

"I didn't exactly take being given a heart attack well, so I kind of got mad for a moment and she was like deer in headlights. She began to leave until I told her I was only joking around."

"S-Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference," Bill says.

"I did get her smile though and then I guess she went off to find this Mike guy."

"I think it was the same Mike who helped us earlier today," Beverly mutters. "I did see the resemblance."

"Only without the glasses," Eddie nods in agreement.

"She was a weird kid, scares very easily, but apparently she was able to scare the shit out of those assholes,"

"Richie, l-language!" Bill barks, as Georgie is still present through everything.

"Push me higher Billy!" the youngest says in excitement, the foul

language not affecting him in the least.

Apparently, the younger Denbrough brother didn't have quite as an eventful day, but he came out of the first grade proudly holding a drawing of... a dog or something, it was hard to tell, and he looked forward to having his mother hang it up on the refrigerator. He told his brother all about his teacher, Mrs. Creed, who had two cats, one named Judd and another named Church the Second. She also had a young son named Gage. He talked all about his classmates and how one girl gave him a pudding cup since he didn't have anything besides a sandwich since his mother had yet to go shopping.

"It... it just didn't seem natural," Stan continues, still unable to shake the fear he felt. "The way everything moved like that...and... and it looked like she was doing it."

"Like moving stuff with her mind?" Eddie asks.

"Y-Yeah,"

"We were probably just imagining it," Beverly says, trying to rationalize everything. She then flips upside down on the bars and hangs by her legs, wanting to change the subject.

The boys of the group bite their lips and look at one another. They decide to just drop it, maybe they were just imagining things, but they could never tell what was real and what wasn't anymore after last summer, the world was full of crazy things that none of them could truly understand.

They sit in relative silence for a while, waiting for Ben to reappear and so they could go ride their bikes to explore Hawkins a little bit. They kind of wished Mike was with them, the group didn't seem the same without him.

...

Finally, after what felt like forever, Ben came to the park, walking his bike along and having the biggest smile on his face.

"About time dude," Richie mutters. "We were getting bored over here."

"Sorry, but there were just so many cool things to look at. Did you know the A/V club has an old Morse code transmitter and the latest Heathkit H.A.M system?"

"Whoopee!" Richie says, rolling his eyes. "Who the hell cares?!"

"It's so cool. Mr. Clarke told me that the signals are powerful enough to reach Australia."

"And did the other nerds show up for that?"

"No, Mr. Clarke gave me a private tour and told me what the group does."

"So, I guess this means you're going to sign up then?" Beverly asks.

"What do you think?"

"I think that I have five bucks in my pocket, and I want to find the nearest convenience store and buy a Coke and the newest issue of Playboy. So *let's go*," the trash-mouth of the group insists, grabbing his bike, ready to explore the tiny town.

The group then begins riding away from the playground and down onto the streets, allowing themselves to get to know their new hometown.

While it was a bit bigger than Derry, it still had its own unique sense of character. It also felt less foreboding than their cursed town was. Little did they know that they had yet to truly feel the menace of this place. They bike down the Main Street, past the clock tower and library, ignoring Ben's pleas to go have a look inside. They bike past a *RadioShack*, a furniture store, a cinema, a pub called *Hideaway* and then come to *Melvald's General Store*, where they park their bikes and go inside for some snacks and other desirables.

A woman behind the counter watches as these new kids go searching through the place. She'd never seen their faces before and wondered where they had come from. She then turns and sees the local town newsletter announcing the arrivals of Derry residents. She'd forgotten all about it and wonders which of the children were in Will's class. She'd have to ask him when she got home.

"Billy can I get a Superman comic book," the littlest of the group asks, tugging on his brother's sleeve.

Joyce Byers immediately smiles, reminded of how Will used to beg Johnathan to buy him things like crayons or a comic book. The two brothers looked to have a very similar age gap to her two sons, it was almost uncanny. She watches as the boy continues to beg until his brother agrees.

When the two come up to the cash, the smaller boy's slightly freckled face and messily combed hair try to peer upwards as Joyce rings the brothers in for their money. She gives the boy a warm smile and the youngster takes it as the chance to make a new friend.

"Hi, I'm Georgie," he says with a smile, revealing a small gap in his teeth.

Bill wants to scold his brother by telling his names to strangers, but Joyce never gives him a chance.

"Hello there Georgie," she responds. "I haven't seen your handsome face here before."

The six-year-old giggles and puts his hands on the edge of the station to pull himself up to see her better.

"We just came from Derry," the little boy announces. "This is my brother, Billy."

"B-Bill," he corrects. He decides it's too late to try and discourage his brother and lets this introduction run its course. "My name is Bill."

"It's nice to meet you both. I'm Mrs. Byers. How do you like Hawkins so far?"

"It's great," Georgie chirps. "I'm in the first grade and I have a nice teacher, and I've already made a friend, she shared her pudding with me..."

"That certainly sounds like a nice friend," Joyce laughs to herself, so happy with the little boy's warm energy. It certainly made her long shift a little bit brighter. After all, since Starcourt had come around,

many of the local businesses were experiencing slow sales, to the point where some people are afraid of going out of business. Her warm brown eyes laugh along with her. She then turns to Bill as she finishes ringing up their purchases. "Do you go to Hawkins Middle School?"

The preteen nods.

"Well, you might have a few classes with my son, Will. Keep an eye out for him next time," she says. "Your total is 5.36."

Bill counts the change from his pocket and Joyce decides to do something.

She reaches under the counter and pulls out a container filled with lollipops. She'd often offer them to the younger customers; Holly, Mike's little sister always loved to get a sweet treat, insisting on a "red one" every time.

"Our special customers always get a special treat, would you like one Georgie?"

"Can I Billy?" the boy asks, his hazel eyes full of eagerness.

"Is it okay?"

Joyce nods in reassurance and Bill turns to his brother.

"O-Okay Georgie, but eat-t it now so Mom doesn't find out."

"Don't worry, I can keep a secret," Joyce winks.

"I want a green one!" the child says, taking one.

"W-What do you say?" Bill prompts.

"Thank you, Mrs. Byers," the youngster says sweetly before sticking the lollipop in his mouth.

"You are most welcome sweetheart, I hope you around here soon."

"T-Thank you," Bill says, taking the objects from the counter and

beginning to follow his brother out the door of the store.

"You're welcome, stay safe on the roads," she says.

Eventually, she rings up the rest of the young adolescents, all approximately the same age as Will. She smiles at all of them, happy to see some fresh new faces and to get her sales up after such a slow day. The group of kids hang around outside the store with their bikes, almost spitting images of Will and his friends. She begins going around, cleaning up a few things, reducing the prices on the school supplies even further since Labour Day was often one of the busiest times for them... or rather it used to be.

When she comes back to the cash, the kids are still hanging around outside. She hears her boss in the back and knows how he feels about loiterers.

She goes over and sticks her head out.

"Hey kids, this might not be the best place for you to hang out right now. My boss, Mr. Melvald is coming, and he doesn't like people hanging around the front of the store, especially teenagers. Sorry, if it were up to me you could stay, but I'm just warning you now. If you want a good place to hang out, there's a picnic table about of block from here next to the video store. The owner there doesn't care."

"Thank you, Mrs. Byers," the red-haired girl says politely.

The group of friends gather their things and take off to where the store employee told them to go. They continue to hang around until it's time for Eddie and Bill and Georgie to go home for dinner. The Losers part ways, navigating the strange streets of Hawkins, Indiana, their new home. At least, everything seemed as though it would be all right for all of them. No bullies, no clowns, nothing that could make this experience go wrong.

(Famous last words)

...

When Bill and Georgie get home, they find their father in the living room repairing a light fixture and a pot of stew on the stove in the

kitchen.

Bill looks up to see his mother talking on the phone, indicating that his father had hooked up the phone lines. She had a rather worried look on her face as she listened to whatever was being said. She even has to wave Georgie away when he tries to show her his drawing. Whatever it was, it was very important. At one point, she blocks the mouthpiece.

"Bill, please wash your hands and set the table for me, Georgie, go wash your hands."

Bill does as he is told, while quietly listening to see if he can pick up anything in the conversation.

When his mother does hang up, she lets out a deep sigh and goes about serving the stew without as much as a word.

After they've sat down to dinner, Mrs. Denbrough clears her throat to get the table's attention.

"I just got a call from my mother; apparently Joel has shown up at the family farm, having followed your cousin home from school. He's parked himself at the edge of the property line, not caring how many times my father threatens to shoot him. My mother insists that they have to get Mia out of there as soon as possible, so she will probably be joining us within the next two weeks."

A/N: Hey everyone, thank you for the reviews, sorry it took me so long to update, with several of my other stories doing well, it takes a while to get around to all of them. I was also having a bit of writer's block. Here's the new chapter, I hope you like it. Please follow and review.

10. Chapter 9: Arcade Battle

Chapter 9: Arcade Battle

"So, your cousin's coming to town?" Stan asks.

The Losers Club, minus Georgie, are walking their bikes along the streets of Hawkins, towards the arcade at Richie's much annoying insistence. Thankfully, Mrs. Denbrough took Bill's younger brother to the town pool, likely one of the last chances to do so before the cold weather set in. The video game nerd of the group had to see what kind of cool games were there and if they were worth the change in his pocket that rattles continuously as he rides in loops around his friends.

"She's more like my a-adopted cousin," Bill clarifies. "Her mom and my mom are not really sisters."

"Is your cousin hot?" Richie asks, riding around in front of the group again.

"How the hell should I know?" Bill says. "I only met her like once. And that was b-before Georgie was born."

"Okay, but if she does turn out to be a total babe, I call dibs," the trash-mouth says.

"How sexist can you be?" Beverly asks, rolling her eyes.

"Yeah Dweebus, you can't call dibs on a person," Eddie adds.

"Hey, you guys are just jealous that I had the decency to call dibs on her," the nerd says.

"There's nothing decent about claiming a girl like she's the last seat on the bus," Beverly insists.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, save the equal rights talk for your political campaign," Richie mutters, wishing his friends would just ride their bikes instead of walking through town, which took ten times longer.

"Why would she go for you anyway if you act like a douchebag all the time?" Eddie asks.

"Chicks dig the bad boys. Especially ones with the biggest equipment," he says gleefully, smirking at the innuendo.

Everyone rolls their eyes.

"N-Not if you keep talking like that you won't," Bill adds with a smile.

"Blue balls ache like hell Rich," Eddie adds.

"Yeah, a few kicks to the crotch and there won't be anything left," Stan smirks.

"Compared to what? Wasn't yours cut off at your bar mitzvah?" the nerd snaps back

"Why are we going to the arcade anyway?" Ben asks, wanting to change the subject. "There's a really awesome library in Hawkins that I want to check out."

"Because some people actually like goof off and kill brains cells on the weekend Pointdexter," Richie says.

"What about the Starcourt Mall?" Bev asks. "A lot of kids in school were talking about it. It seems like the place to hang out."

None of the kids from Derry had actually been to a mall before since their town was so small and local that modern "luxuries" from the 1980s had not been constructed. However, they had seen what malls were for on TV and in movies.

"Yeah, come on Richie, let's do something other than play *Street Fighter*," Eddie whines.

"P-Plus it will more likely be air-conditioned too," Stan adds, wiping sweat from his brow. Despite it being September, the weather in Indiana was still fairly warm. There had yet to be a hint of cool autumn air in the tiny town.

"Look, we'll go there after, but I'd much rather spend my money on

stuff that's fun, rather than buy something, wear it once, and then forget about it in the back of my closet."

The friends sigh and follow their trash-mouth friend down the streets.

Eventually, they come to the parking lot with the neon signs above the lot flickering while advertising the Palace Arcade. The building has windows with flickering lights and odd sounds coming from within it, but doesn't look like anything particularly special, it's like their arcade in Derry, just bigger. However, before any of the other Losers could say anything, Richie dumps his bike down and hurries inside.

Just as the others are approaching, a blue Camero comes careening around the corner, blasting loud heavy rock music, and disregarding any other people or vehicles on the road. The car practically floors it into the parking lot and nearly mows down the group as it pulls up in front of the arcade.

"Holy shit," Eddie gasps, doing his best not to panic and be forced to take out his inhaler.

"Hey, asshole! There are kids walking here!" Beverly shouts angrily, raising her fist up.

Unfortunately, her protests are not heard as the music continues to echo through the lot as an angry red-headed girl gets out and slams the car door as hard as she can. The group can't hear what's being said as the driver says something to the girl, which seems to make her extremely angry, so much that she begins to shout at the guy. She then kicks the car and flips the guy off as he races away, leaving her with just her skateboard.

She looks extremely flustered but also embarrassed. Her eyes meet the gaze of the group before she turns and heads inside.

"Looks like you're not the only one who thinks he's an asshole," Ben says.

"Isn't sh-she the girl from science?" Bill asks, recognizing the long-red hair.

"Yeah, Maxine, I think her name was," Ben says.

"But didn't the teacher call her Max?" Eddie adds.

"Well, whatever her name is, looks like she's a gamer like Richie."

"And a skateboarder," Stan adds.

"Speaking of him, we'd better go and find him before they end up throwing him out."

The Losers Club nods and hurries over, parking their bikes by the rack and then heading inside, right behind Max/Maxine.

They find Richie at the counter, shouting at a tall lanky person with long hippie hair and a logo t-shirt. If Richie grew a couple of inches and lost the glasses, the two could be clones of one another. The guy is staring tiredly at the trash-mouth dweeb in front of him, chowing down on some junk food.

"How the fuck can you not have *Street Fighter*?!" Richie protests. "It's the game that started the existence of arcades in the first place!"

"Sure buddy," the guy says in a monotone voice, smirking at the kid's anger. "Just find some other game, it's not like there aren't others in a **video game** arcade."

"My money is reserved for only the best. I've spent exactly 62 hours, 47 minutes and 23 seconds training to beat all those characters in Japan alone, I had the highest score in Derry and I'm the only one who figured out how to do the *Tatsumaki Senpukyaku* special attack. And you're telling me that I can't even use those skills to become the master of all the countries?"

"Well I've got bad news for you Spectasaurus, you're not in Derry and we don't have your stupid game, so suck it up," the guys insists, continuing to munch on his snack.

Richie looks ready to climb over the desk and put this guy in a headlock, despite the nerd's overwhelming height advantage, when his friends come up to quell the fight.

"Rich, what's going on?" Eddie asks, trying to calm his best friend down.

"This walking pimple-factory tells me they don't have *Street Fighter*, how the hell am I supposed to become the master if I can't practice?!"

"It's acne and it's a legitimate medical condition," the tall guy says more harshly. "Just you wait, you'll get it all over your face, you string-bean wastoid."

"And when was the last time some girl sucked your face?" Richie snaps.

"Let's just go to the mall," Beverly sighs. She scans around the arcade and sees the girl Max, playing some game called *Dig Dug*. The girl still looks angry, but that rage was probably more focused on the game now than the asshole driver who had dropped her off.

For a second, Max looks up and meets Beverly's gaze. The Derry girl gives her a friendly smile, hoping to see some recognition, but Max merely frowns intensely and rolls her eyes before going back to the game.

Bev begins to wonder what she'd done to offend Max. It's not like they'd ever spoken to each other in class or otherwise, but it seemed that the Hawkins skateboarder had instantly disliked this outsider.

It stung just a little bit, after all, she was one of the kids who had come to help the Losers Club when they were being bullied, but now it seemed that Maxine wanted nothing to do with her or their group. Deep down, Beverly secretly wanted a new friend of the same gender; while the boys were her good friends and they had been through hell together, they still liked guy things like comic books, fantasy books, horror movies, Lego, and evidently video games. All the girls in Derry had called Bev a slut or 'Beaverly,' they spread rumours about her promiscuity, and overall tried to make her life a living hell. Here, her reputation was not known by anyone, despite none of the rumours being true, and yet this red-headed girl was treating her the same way the girls in Derry did. Did the Max somehow hear about her reputation from other Derry locals and decided to steer clear of her? Or maybe Max just didn't like a lot of people.

It was a mystery to her, but as the boys attempt to tear Richie from the counter, she decides to just go to the mall and hopefully meet some nicer people...

Hopefully.

A/N: Sorry, it took so long, but thank you for the continued support. Just so you know, I'm aware that Street Fighter didn't come out until 1987, but I'm bending the timeline to give us a good Richie scene.

11. Chapter 10: Ahoy Annoyed

Chapter 10: Ahoy Annoyed

"I can't believe they don't have *Street Fighter*!" Richie continues, much to the annoyance to his friends. Eddie and Beverly's heads go back as if in pure agony. The group is navigating the streets of Hawkins, following behind the bus that takes most people to Starcourt Mall. Of course, they could have just taken the bus as well, but they were concerned that Richie's bitching or annoying imitations would get them kicked off the vehicle for sure.

"I mean, there should be a law in place to ensure that every type of video game is in an arcade."

"SHUT UP RICHIE!" Stan snaps as loudly as he can. It's so loud that some of the patrons on the bus they're following actually turn around to see what is happening.

"W-Who cares," Bill says.

"I care, what the hell am I supposed to do in the shit-hole town anyways."

"Hang out at the mall like normal kids," Beverly says, as the club bikes up a slight hill towards the large parking lot of the shopping mall.

A large tan and burgundy building stands before the group, with the large neon pink and blue sign of *Starcourt Mall* above the arched entrance. The Losers Club had never seen anything taller than a 2-storey building in Derry; this place gigantic to them and the anticipation of what was beyond those brass doors got Richie to shut up and the rest of them racing towards the entrance. Beverly is the first one to park her bike at the bike racks and head inside.

"B-Bev!" Bill calls. "Wait up!"

"Well come on then!" she shouts in excitement. She can't wait for the slowpokes to catch up, she pushes through the doors and enters into

the air-conditioned building.

While the cool air was a nice relief, it paled in comparison to what she was seeing. By the time the boys caught up, they were completely enthralled by everything around them.

The kids look on in absolute amazement. Their heads turn in every direction, trying to take everything in. Nothing like this ever actually existed in Derry. It was all so exciting. The lights, the sounds, the smells, the displays, and all the people walking about, giving in to 1980s consumerism. From *The Gap* to *JC Penny*, from *RadioShack* to a photo place called *Flash Studio*; half of these stores none of the Club had ever heard of before. It was all completely spectacular to them and the desire to see everything had them ready to go.

"Oh man, this is *the* place to go," Stan says, completely floored by the number of stores on the multi-levelled building. "I didn't think you could fit so many places in one place."

"And then some," Eddie agrees. The asthmatic of the group was the only one with the sense and the foresight to grab a map on the way in. He opens it and the friends gather around to see all the different places.

"H-Holy shit, they have a movie theatre in t-this place," Bill says, unable to control his stutter due to his own excitement.

"There's another arcade here too," Eddie adds, pointing to a location on the map. "Maybe they have *Street Fighter* and that will shut you up."

"What the hell is *Zales*?" Stan asks.

"Is *Sam Goody's* a person or a store?" Beverly asks.

"There's a *Waldenbooks* here!" Ben says in excitement. "Let's go in there first."

Some older girls who are wearing large, brightly patterned spandex outfits and carrying gym bags over their shoulders walk past the group, causing Richie's bespectacled eyes to follow and he could feel himself drooling over them.

"I'm going wherever they're going," he says. All his friends roll their eyes in annoyance. He tries to flatten his wildly long hair and adjust his glasses to make himself appear sexy or whatever he thought could pass as attractive.

"Stop ogling the girls, let's do something else!" Eddie insists.

However, Beverly has found what she's looking for on the map.

"Well, you guys do whatever you want, but I'm going for some ice cream," she says. This was a luxury that she was never given growing up. Her father was always too cheap to treat his daughter to anything and her foster family sometimes bought it, but the guardians attempted to keep the intake of sugar to a minimum. So, when given the opportunity to splurge on this cool treat, she took it. She hurries over to the store known as *Scoops Ahoy* in the food court, a typical 80s hang out with the poor attempts to create some kind of gimmick or theme to attract customers.

The parlour is designed to resemble a place by the sea, with portholes and wheels from sailing ships, and as the red-headed loser looks inside, she can see that the staff behind the ice cream counter are dressed like sailors to go along with the theme. A sullen-looking girl, likely a few years older than Beverly, stands behind the counter wearing this uniform that consisted of a white and blue striped shirt under a blue vest with a red scarf underneath the collar, a blue skirt, a sailor's hat with AHOY across it. She hardly cracks any kind of facial expression other than annoyance. It's clear that she hates her job and wants to be anywhere else.

Just as Beverly is about to go inside, she notices that Richie and Eddie followed her, not exactly the people she wants to be seen with right now.

"Hello Mama," Richie says, gazing at the girl behind the counter. "Screw Jazzercise, where's she been all my life?"

Both Eddie and Bev roll their eyes again.

"Can I please go first?" Beverly begs. "This was my idea plus I don't want her spitting in my ice cream because I just happen to be friends

with you. I also want to be able to enjoy a cone for when she slaps the glasses off your face for being such a creep."

"She won't do anything once I turn on the charm." He licks his hand to flatten his hair and adjusts himself further in the window of the store, in clear view of everyone. It was clear to Richie's friends that the guy has no shame and is not self-conscious in the least. The bespectacled loser also adjusts the crotch of his pants as if to emphasize that what he had was amazing. This mortifies Eddie and Beverly.

"What charm?" Eddie sputters. "You're nothing but a frog-faced dweeb in glasses and no filter."

"She's going to call security on him, I'd better get my ice cream now," Bev says, going inside and getting in line.

When a Love-Dovey couple finally leaves while sharing a milkshake with two straws, Beverly walks up to place her order.

"What do you want?" the girl in the sailor's outfit asks, chewing her gum and looking more annoyed with each passing customer. B

"Just a small vanilla cone, please... uh..." Beverly reads the name tag. "Robin, I don't need anything on it."

"Makes my job easier, that'll be 2.50," is the response.

The red-head hands over the cash and Robin goes to scoop the ice cream. As the girl of the Losers Club stands and waits patiently, she can see the employee gazing at the redhead a lot longer than would be necessary.

What is it about these people? Beverly thinks to herself. *What did I do to get these stares? Am I seriously a freakshow to everyone?*

"Here, have a nice day," Robin says in a monotone voice, handing Bev her cone.

"Thank you," she says politely. "Have a nice day too."

"Whatever."

After she accepts the treat, Bev hears the girl mutter.

"Translated a secret code, infiltrated a top-secret lab and survived Russian torture and its explosion, and the fire couldn't take this crappy place with it?"

Whatever that meant, Beverly takes a few licks of her cone and goes to stand out of the way until

"Hey there sweetheart," Richie says, putting on his best smile and leaning in close. "I'll take a double scoop of Rocky Road and your phone number."

"Are you seriously trying to hit on me?" the girl behind the counter asks, raising her eyebrows. The kid probably hadn't even hit puberty yet and he thinks he's the cat's meow. It did look a lot like Mike Wheeler though, minus the coke-bottle glasses and the general perverted personae.

"Depends on whether you like it or not. I could take you out for dinner and something other than ice cream for dessert."

The girl just snaps her gum at the trash-mouth. She admired the kid's guts to try something, but he was worse than Steve with the pick-up lines and general charisma... much, much worse. "I'm not interested, and customers are not allowed to lean on the counter."

"Richie get out of the way before she calls the cops on you," Eddie insists, shoving his friend to the side. "I'll take anything that is non-dairy and low in fat."

"This... is an ice cream store, everything in here is made with dairy,"

"You don't have anything with fruit in it like sorbet?"

"How the hell am I supposed to know what that is?" Robin snaps, becoming more annoyed by the minute.

"Well, it's a substitute for people who have allergies to dairy. Most stores are required to have some sort of alternative for anyone who is lactose-intolerant."

"How about I give you just the cone as a substitute?" she glares at this short and wiry kid who will most likely have trouble getting laid in high school. Probably because he wouldn't let anyone actually near him.

"How many calories are in your cones?"

The girl lets out an exasperated sigh and turns away. She opens the frosted glass window behind the counter and sticks her head in.

When she can't find what she's looking for, she slams it shut and goes into the back. Within a minute or so she pulls a tall guy with brown hair and eyes out of the back, dressed in a similar sailor-themed outfit, but it was dark blue and he wasn't wearing the hat.

"What the hell?"

"It's your turn Dingus, I can't take it anymore. You're the babysitter now deal with these freaks. I'm taking my break."

"But I haven't even finished mine yet..."

"Sucks for you, now scoop!" she insists before disappearing into the back of the parlour.

But apparently, the guy wasn't done as he opened the window to yell back at her.

"Just because we've been through a lot together doesn't mean you and push me around like this."

The three Losers club members see the middle finger appear in the window before it's shut again.

With a deep sigh, the guy turns to look at the customers in front of him.

When Beverly looks at him, she immediately notices that he is a very attractive person. She reads that his name is Steve. His strong, lean body and slick styled hair give off an air of confidence, and his dark eyes seem to hide some kind of secret. He also looked rather vulnerable as if he'd been hurt in the past. She feels her heart pound

a little harder and she shyly looks away. He was way too old for her anyway.

Richie speaks first: "You are so lucky to work with that Mamacita,"

The guy looks at Richie as if he's lost his mind. It was clear to this guy that the geek in glasses was trying way too hard to be a ladies-man, something that Dustin Henderson learned was not his style either... and evidently wasn't Steve's style either. At least, not in the real world.

"She's not your type Dude, not by a long shot," Steve says.

"Oh, I'm anyone's type, chicks dig the glasses."

"Said no woman ever," Beverly cuts in, trying to shut this down before it becomes any worse. She gazes apologetically at the cute guy behind the counter. He was not hard to look at, despite the blue sailor suit and hat which made him look like a knock off from Donald Duck. "Just order your ice cream so we can go." She looks apologetically at the guy and he shrugs.

"Double scoop of Rocky Road, and anything low-fat for Eddster here," Richie says.

"I told you never to call me that," the smallest of the group hisses.

Steve just smirks at the teasing, like Dustin and the other kids, in fact, the kid in glasses was the spitting image of Mike, but much less obnoxious. He rings up the boys and goes to scoop their ice cream. He decides to fill the awkward silence

"You kids aren't from around here, are you?" he asks.

"W-We're from Derry," Beverly stammers, deciding to answer the guy's question.

"Oh, so you guys were part of that evacuation project? Why was that again?"

The three kids look at each other nervously and Steve notices the shift in their expressions. He knew that look... he'd had it himself and

the rest of their group that knew about the Demogorgons and Mind Flayers had it too. These kids had seen some shit. Could it be the same? It was possible, but how?

"Poisoned water supply," Eddie answers quickly.

"That must suck... the re-locating and everything."

"We don't mind," Beverly says. "We'd rather be anywhere else than Derry."

"Seems to be mutual in small towns like this," the eldest of the group agrees. "Small towns hide a lot of secrets."

These words send chills up all their spines, and it wasn't from the ice cream. Steve hands over the ice cream.

"Guess I'll see you around," he says.

"Thanks," Richie says, his tone of voice and attitude has completely shifted. Both he and Eddie take their cones and walk away, a lot slower than before. Beverly steals one last glance at Steve, wondering what he meant by that cryptic sentence. Was Hawkins like Derry? Did it have secrets too?

Once the kids are gone, Robin opens the windows to stare out at Steve. She'd heard the conversation, but she wasn't thinking much of it, despite what she already knew about Hawkins as a whole.

"Add a few new kids to that family of your Dingus?" she teases. "You should open up your own Nanny agency."

"Just shut up and let me take the rest of my break."

Please follow and review.

12. Chapter 11: Copy That

Chapter 11: Copy That

"You're going to go all the way out to the field just to talk to Suzie?" Will asks in disbelief.

The usual group of friends are hanging out on Mike's lawn after Mrs. Wheeler had insisted, they go outside and enjoy the nice weather while it was still there. The woman had then taken Holly to run errands and locked the house, preventing them from getting back in. Will had wanted to play D and D, but everyone else just wanted to sit around and do nothing, considering how long the school week had seemed to have dragged, it felt like too much mental strain to perform the strategy board game.

Max had come over to the house after spending some time at the arcade. She laid a blanket out and seemed to be trying to tan, even though she was more likely to gain freckles than anything else. She also had a portable radio playing as she lays stretched out in her sunglasses. Eleven also sits on a nearby blanket, mindlessly looking through some of the magazines Max had brought. She wasn't really paying attention to what was in them and is watching her boyfriend. Mike had his bike parked on the edge of the grass and was attempting to fix a leaky tire and repair his bike chain that seemed to always become tangled, even after he had straightened it. He could sense that El was messing with it because she seemed to be hiding a smile and her bleeding nose behind a copy Vogue. Will had brought a book with him, at his mother's insistence that he broaden his horizons a bit, even though he was looking through the pile of comics that Lucas had brought. The curly-haired boy of the group is packing his backpack to help strengthen the signal of his radio tower, Cerebro.

"Saturdays are the only days she has off. Sundays are sacred in Mormon culture," Dustin insists.

"Is that even true?" Max asks, doubting that Dustin had any type of grasp on the religion his girlfriend's family followed.

"I don't really know, but it doesn't matter, I've waited all week to talk to her and I'm not going to waste another minute if you guys aren't actually going to do anything."

"You going to tell her that you purred at another girl?" Will asks, deciding to start teasing him.

"I only do that when I find a girl attractive, it doesn't mean I'm in love with her!" Dustin snaps.

"Yeah, well she didn't find it attractive, so stick with Suzie," Max says, turning over onto her stomach on the blanket.

"You going to sing to her again?" Lucas smirks, following Will's lead about teasing their friend.

Immediately, Dustin starts swearing at them.

"F*** you!" he says angrily, finally zipping up his backpack, wanting to escape before this escalated any further.

Lucas and Max smirk before bursting into the theme song from *The Never Ending Story*, the tune they'd all heard over the walkie-talkies in the summer when the group was attempting to stop the Russians under Starcourt Mall and they needed Planck's Constant from the girl Dustin now called his girlfriend. He had serenaded the song to her, much to the delight of his friends.

*"Rhymes that keep their secrets
Will unfold behind the clouds
And there upon a rainbow..."* Max continues in a rather harmonious voice, trying not to laugh the entire time.

"I regret doing that in front of any of you," Dustin hisses, angrily, flashing the bird at his friends in deep annoyance.

"It's not like you had much of a choice at the time," Mike says, being sympathetic to Dustin's plight of humiliation, considering he himself had sung to El/Jane several times since they'd started dating and they weren't always his proudest moments, despite trying to be romantic.

"It's a nice song... and movie," Eleven says quietly, pleased that her

boyfriend had shown her the film during the summer.

However, the teasing continues:

*"In your hand
The birth of a new day..."*

"And with that, I make my escape. Warning, this is the kind of thing that will end our friendship" the curly-haired teen says, getting on his bike and pedalling away as fast as he can. He mutters to himself as he leaves the cul-de-sac. "You show your secret talent once and you end up paying for it the rest of your life... I wish Mom hadn't made me go to that choir program."

...

The wind picks up a bit as Dustin begins walking his bike up the hill towards where Cerebro is stationed. The long grass whipped around slightly in the late summer air. The makeshift radio tower shone in the sunlight. It was by far the best thing he ever created and was so happy to be able to communicate with his girlfriend. Plus, the H.A.M. radio had also managed to help save the day over the summer.

Once he reaches the device, he drops his bike and begins to start tweaking and making modifications to it so he'll be able to get a stronger signal. Finally, he turns the dial to the correct station and picks up the mic and presses on the button.

"Suzie, do you copy?" he says. His mind flashes back to the beginning of the summer where he had tried desperately to prove to his friends that she was real and spent a very long night in the hills alone until he picked up on a top-secret Russian frequency; that led to a lot of problems culminating on the Fourth of July celebration. He shudders slightly, before pressing the talk button again to contact his girlfriend.

"Suzie-poo, don't make me sing to you," he teases.

"Dusty Bun?!" an excited girl squeals from the other end of the line. "Is that really you?"

"It's me Suzie-poo, I've missed you."

"I missed you too Dusty, it feels like an eternity since we last spoke."

"I know, I wish I could just stay out here all day and talk to you... hear the sound of your voice..."

"You are the sweetest," she coos into the microphone.

"No, you are," he smiles, sitting down in the long grass to have a nice conversation with a girl he missed a lot.

"So has anything interesting happened since we last spoke?" she asks.

"Not too much, some new kids moved into the town they were part of the Derry Evacuation Project. Something about their water supply being contaminated or something."

There's no response on the other end of the radio. Nothing but static. Immediately, Dustin is up and checking to see if something happened with the equipment, but there doesn't seem to be anything wrong.

"Suzie?"

"D-Derry, Maine?"

"Yeah, have you heard of it?"

"A lot of people have heard of Derry Dusty, it's... a very evil place..." Her voice is so chilling that Dustin can practically feel the goosebumps on his arms. He can sense the dread as she seems to speak about this place. "My Grandpa used to tell me that it's where Satan himself established his roots and he feeds off the sins of anyone who lives there. I even heard that it is cursed to be the Devil's shadow because of how many people go missing there, especially kids."

The curly-haired boy scratches the back of his neck and merely chews on the words spoken by this usually happy and positive girl. This was not something that came from some comic book or fantasy novel; the way she was talking sounded as if this was some sort of dark secret that she hated even wanting to talk about. The worry and ominous tone in her voice also scared him and he desperately wants to change the subject.

"Sounds like a real ghost story, why didn't you tell it at camp?"

"Because it's not a story Dusty... all those stories are real. Those kids are lucky to have been evacuated from there. I hope they like Hawkins and decide to stay there."

Dustin swallows again, not really sure how to respond. "C-Copy that... though I wish you would come to Hawkins and stay here."

"I do too," she says, the perkiness in her voice had returned. "I am working on convincing my parents to come on a road trip to visit. I don't want to wait until next summer to see you."

"Me neither, if I had the money, I'd hop on a bus and come to Utah. I'd go to the ends of the Earth for you Suzie."

"You're such a sweetie..." she squeals in delight, the darkness is seemingly forgotten from their earlier conversation.

The young teens in love talk for a long time until Suzie says she must go help her mother make dinner.

"I'll talk to you next week," he says.

"You promise?"

"Triple promise. And don't read the latest issue of *Superman* before Thursday, I don't get my allowance until then."

"I triple promise, over and out Dusty-Bun."

"Over and out Suzie-Poo."

Dustin puts the mic down and continues looking up at the sky, enjoying the late afternoon sun as it slowly begins to set near the trees. He has an enormous smile on his face and it's not going to leave any time soon. His mind fills with his memories from camp. The first time he and Suzie kissed behind her cabin and holding hands by the campfire while one of the counsellors strummed a guitar. He does want to see her again, not for it to be a summer fling.

Then, his mind clouds with the thoughts of what she'd told him about

Derry. It sounded like the scariest place to live, and here he thought the Upside Down was bad. He tries to shake the darkness from his mind, but it stays there, no matter how hard he tries to think about other things.

At that moment, Cerebo suddenly springs to life again.

"Houston, we have a problem..."

This nearly scares Dustin out of his skin as he flips up and checks the control head. For some reason, it's on a different channel, and it has started picking up another transmission.

His heart pounds against his chest, not wanting to repeat what happened with the Russians.

Suddenly, the voice returns with a crackle of static.

"That's one small step of man..."

Had he picked up some kind of frequency used by NASA? Could Cerebo be that powerful? If it is, then he's a genius. He could actually talk to astronauts and...

"One giant leap for Georgie."

He feels some disappointment, but also some relief. The voice on the other end is way too young to be a NASA employee and was probably some truck driver's kid having fun with the H.A.M. radio. He goes to turn it off when he hears...

"Boldly go where no man has gone before... Captain, man the lifeboats!"

Amused, still curious, and glad that this unknown voice was in English, Dustin decides that it's safe to investigate further and picks up the mic.

"Hello?" Dustin says cautiously.

"Hello?"

"Who is this? I think you're on the wrong channel."

"Hi there, I'm Georgie, what's your name?"

No way in hell. Dustin thinks to himself. Is this the same Georgie that he'd met the other night near Mike's house? The kid from Derry? Speak of the devil it seemed.

"Georgie? How did you get on this radio frequency?"

"What does that word mean?"

"What I mean is how did you get a H.A.M. radio? This is highly technical equipment and the frequency must be really strong, considering it can reach all the way to Utah..." He begins to go on about highly technical language until he realizes that he's talking to a six-year-old who still believes in the tooth fairy.

"There's this big radio in the basement of our new house. My daddy told me not to touch it, but I pressed one button and all these lights came on..."

"Did you touch any of the dials?"

"What are those?"

"The big circles, I think you got onto my channel."

"This is cool, I'm like a man in space or a captain on a boat!"

"Yeah, it is pretty cool, but I think you should hang up buddy, just so you don't get into trouble."

"Okay, bye!"

"Bye," the teen says before the line goes to static again.

Who else in this town has a H.A.M. radio? He thinks to himself. *There aren't a lot of truckers around here, and who would want to have one in their basement, they can't get good signals down there...*

He ponders this as the static continues to get louder and louder, and

there are a few beeps heard. Dustin attempts to adjust the frequency a bit more. It's then he hears some weird carnival music begin to play. Almost like the one, he'd heard on the Russian tape, but it seems to be different... Softer and there's no Russian being spoken. Something then laughs aloud, almost like a clown doing a routine. There is more static before 5 words are heard that are unfortunately crystal clear to him.

"We all float down here..."

A/N: Hey everyone, thank you for all of the awesome reviews and support from everyone. So I've decided to clarify the timeline since Guest was a bit confused if I featured.

So basically, the stuff with the Russians on the Fourth of July did happen, only the MindFlayer wasn't apart of it and Billy wasn't possessed, Hopper didn't go missing etc... yet. Starcourt did catch fire during the U.S. army attempting to raid the facility, but it was easily repaired which is why Steve and Robin still work at Scoops Ahoy. I've made it so the Russians opening the gate actually re-released the MindFlayer, which is now unknowingly lurking around and searching for allies to help it. We will see a lot more of this creature and what the presence of the kids in Derry could mean as the story continues. It also appears that Suzie knows a little bit about Derry too and the darkness that lurks there.

13. Chapter 12: Storied Life of Mia Rogers

Chapter 13: Storied Life of Mia Rogers

"But Mom..."

"Sweetie, it's just for a little while, until I can find us a place to live."

"You've said that a thousand times before and he still finds us no matter where we go..."

Mia Rogers sighs heavily, tucking the phone under her chin as she sits in her grandparent's bedroom. She brushes some brown hair behind her ear... another reminder of how she looks more like her father than her mother. Even when she looks into her grandmother's vanity mirror across the room, all she can see is her father. Her mousy brown hair, her blue eyes, her imperfect figure... everything was a reminder that she was her father's child, not her mother's.

Her mother always reassured her daughter that she went through "the ugly duck" phase too, as her mother so eloquently called it. When she was in high school, she hated how she looked, saw every imperfection on her body, but she'd grown out of it, become a beautiful woman... a woman who attracted a monster. A monster who continuously pursued them, fuelled by his addiction to alcohol and a desire to harm those who "hurt" him.

"Why did you marry him in the first place?" the teenager asks.

"You know why," Caroline White-Rogers says.

"Mom, the only way we're ever actually going to be rid of him is if we leave the country, change our names, or outright kill him."

"Amelia Alexius Rogers...!"

"Come on Mom, you have to have daydreamed about it a few times."

"I will not listen to this."

"Mom, I can speak however the hell I want about that bastard. He's

done nothing to earn the title of my father. All he did for you was to provide the genetic material. He's been a deadbeat since the day you brought me home from the hospital; he wasn't even there when you gave birth. He's never held down a job, he's slept with more women than any of us can keep track of (Lord knows how many other children he has out there), he drinks like the world is going to end, and the only thing he's ever given you or I are the physical scars and lasting post-traumatic stress problems."

"Regardless of what he's done, I won't have you talking about taking another person's life."

"Why? He's talked to me about doing that to you since before I even knew the meaning of death."

There's a heavy sigh on the other end of the phone. Caroline lays back on her bed in her hotel room, desperately trying to reason with her daughter. She knew full well that both of them were victims of abuse and she was stuck in the abuse cycle; defending the monster who had given her the greatest gift in the world. She tries day in and day out to stop supporting this man who never earned the right to be a husband or a father. Her stomach turns violently in guilt, for putting her daughter into the situation of abuse. Her life-long problems of abuse with her mother, made her think that yelling and hitting were considered normal. Even after her mother's death and her being taken in by the Walter's, giving her a family and a sister in Sharon Denbrough, the trauma was still there. She just seemed to be drawn to abusive people. It's a pattern she desperately wishes she could break for the sake of her daughter, but Joel's relentless pursuit to gain possession of the "only good thing he ever did," made it so hard. Even after restraining orders and the revoking of parental rights, Joel Rogers insisted on taking Mia away to hurt Caroline. It also didn't help that not even the threat of her adoptive father's rifle could keep the man away and off the family property. Joel might be an alcoholic, but he was smart and practically fearless.

Caroline had worked day and night to find a safe place for her and her "little girl" to live, to give Mia the stability she so desperately needed, but her lack of funds, her past with the police, her hatred of big cities, and the predator that was her ex-husband soured this. It was why Mia was now living in the countryside with her adoptive

grandparents, in the hopes that they could provide safety until Caroline found a job and a house that could support both of them. However, Joel had found them and hung around the small town close to the family farm; preying like a shark and trying to grab his daughter when she was alone. Even if he wasn't allowed within fifty feet of his offspring, he still pushed the limits to find out what was illegal and what wasn't. The police couldn't arrest him if he kept that exact distance.

His threats of stealing his daughter and disappearing forced Mia to only be able to go two places; school and the farmhouse, and even then, several police officers had to escort her on and off school property and Grandpa Zeke had to be there at the bus stop with a loaded rifle. Caroline can't imagine the kind of toll this is taking on her daughter: she knew what it was like to be an outcast in high school and how hard it was to make any friends. The situation her daughter was in with this monster did not help at all.

"I know, I know, I'm sorry Mia, it just happens sometimes. I can remember a time when he was so sweet and caring."

"I know Mom," the young girl sighs. "But let's face it, even those memories were fake, and the guy will not stop unless he's stopped."

"I just want what's best for you sweetie."

"Most moms do," the teenager agrees.

"I have a few interviews coming up in the next month, better-paying jobs that might give us the fresh start we need."

Like I haven't heard that before, the girl thinks to herself, rolling her eyes. "Is it with the military or selling weapons? Because that's the only way we're ever going to be safe from him."

"Mia..."

"Mom, this is driving me insane! Why are you even bothering?! Just let me stay here until I turn eighteen and then I can go wherever the hell I want, and the bastard won't be able to find me!"

Her daughter's desire to just escape breaks Caroline's heart a little bit.

She wanted to watch her daughter graduate and go off to college and spend a least little more time with her baby before she moves out. She knew the constant separation and moving made that so hard, which is why it made her so sad that her daughter just wants to leave.

"Well, clearly the farmhouse is no longer an option, which is why you're going to move to Hawkins to be with your Aunt Sharon."

"Mom, small towns don't work, he'll find us."

"I'm sorry Baby, but she is the last person we can turn to... you know that."

Mia can hear the pleading in her mother's voice. The desperation and exhaustion, the woman is at the end of her rope in trying to keep her daughter safe. Every other relative or close friend that the girl had stayed with became so frightened by the bastard Joel, that they kept sending her to live elsewhere.

The teenager stays silent, letting the tears fall from her eyes. She hated her life. It just sucked so badly. She'd love to trade for anyone else's normal existence. She can't have a family, she can't have a home, she can't have friends, she can't even have a boyfriend because of that bastard. She can't even feel safe wherever she lives. He's taken everything from her, and it hurt so badly.

Just then, the lamp next to her grandparent's bed flickers a few times and pictures on the nearby dresser shake a bit. Even her grandmother's rocking chair begins to act up. Ignoring this, Mia pounds her fist against the bed in frustration and shuts her eyes to squeeze out more tears.

"I'm sorry Mom, but like you... I can't take this anymore."

"I love you, sweetheart," her mother says gently, knowing this is all she can say.

"I love you too."

"I'll talk to you tomorrow, make sure you start packing."

"Yes Mom," she groans before hanging up the phone.

The teenager then stands up from the bed and brushes past her grandmother's rocking chair, stopping it from creaking back and forth. Weird stuff like this happened all the time; but the farmhouse was old, lights didn't always work, and the place shifted and settled. Honestly, if this stuff meant anything, it was probably the demon that haunted her and made her life a living hell. A manifestation of her father's anger, that she carried with her wherever she went.

She leans in front of the vanity, staring at her reflection.

She hated what she saw: an ugly duckling with a hellish life and with no end in sight.

"What are you looking at?" she hisses at her reflection, glaring at herself.

She then looks onto the table of the vanity and finds her parent's wedding photo, but with Joel Rogers now having been ripped out, leaving one-half of the frame empty.

"You ruin everything," she mutters at the ripped section of the frame. "There's a special place in hell for people like you."

She grinds her teeth and tosses down the photo. She clenches her fists and lets the anger rush through her.

Just then the vanity mirror shifts backwards as if by some invisible force. It slams against the wall, taking Mia by surprise. She looks at herself in the mirror for a long moment, sort of spooked, even if this wasn't uncommon anymore.

"Mia dear, can you please come down make a salad for dinner?" her grandmother's sweet voice calls up to her.

"Sure Nana," the girl says, before leaving her grandparent's bedroom.

She clenches her hands into fists one more time, wishing beyond anything in the world that her life was different.

A/N: An introduction to Mia Rogers. It's clear that her life is pretty bad

right now, but things might look better when she moves to Hawkins... we never know. Let me know what you think about her by following and leaving reviews.

14. Chapter 13: Awkward

Chapter 13: Awkward

"That was weird wasn't it?" Bev asks, licking her ice cream cone as the trio walks away from Scoops Ahoy to try and find their friends.

"Extremely," Eddie agrees.

"Dude has something to hide," Richie nods.

"At least he didn't call the cops on you," Beverly says. "Do you have any form of self-control?"

"Who needs that?" Richie scoffs, as a bunch of the jazzercise girls go by and he begins to stare at them again.

"People who actually want to get somewhere in life," Eddie mutters rolling his eyes.

"So, where do you think the others are?" the redhead asks.

"Ten bucks says that Ben's in the bookstore," the trash-mouth says. "But I want to see this arcade. Hope to god that it's better and actually has Street Fighter."

"You can go find it yourself, I'm not dragging you out of there if they don't have it," Eddie insists.

"Let security handle your tantrum."

Richie departs from the group to find the arcade while Eddie and Beverly go towards Waldenbooks. Sure enough, Ben, Bill, and Stan are all browsing the shelves within the place. Ben already has his nose in a book and has found a spot to read.

"Anything good?" Bev asks.

"You have no idea," Ben says, his eyes alit with excitement. He's sitting on the floor in the corner of the bookstore with a stack of books next to him. "There's a whole section dedicated to just history."

Beverly smiles and then finds Bill browsing the horror section.

"Don't you think we've seen enough horror for one lifetime?" she asks, licking her cone.

Bill's ears turn red as he pulls out a book about a killer dog. "T-There's no limit to th-this genre. With Crime, eventually, every story is w-written, same with F-Fantasy, but with Horror, there's no limit to what people will find horrifying."

"What about Romance?" Beverly smirks, lifting an eyebrow cheekily.

Bill's ears go even redder than before, and the colour spreads to his cheeks. He gazes at her blue eyes as she licks her vanilla cone with a broad smile on her face.

Ben looks up from his book and his stomach turns, watching Beverly flirt with Bill. It broke his heart to watch this interaction occur right within earshot of him. He bit his lip to avoid crying or screaming out in frustration. Yes, she knew that he'd written the poem, but it didn't seem to change that they were just friends. She clearly liked Bill more and having to accept this reality was hard than he ever imagined. He keeps thinking that he should focus his affections on someone who appreciates his love of poetry because pining for Bev was getting him nowhere.

He sighs and goes back to reading, pretending not to show that he'd seen everything.

"R-Romance... is a complicated one..." Bill tries to explain, but words were failing him completely. He didn't want to insult her favourite genre, but Romance novels tend to get into generic and cheesy plots a lot quicker than Fantasy books.

"I'm just kidding," she laughs, pleased that she's still able to make the boys stammer. "I'm more Fantasy than Romance, but Horror is always one for a good scare."

"W-Well, Stan's in the Science-Fiction section if y-you want something different."

"Where's Richie by the way?" Stan asks, poking his head from behind

a bookshelf.

"Where do you think?" Eddie groans. He's browsing through the Science-Fiction section while nibbling on his cone. "Does anyone know if Dune is any good? What about The Martian Chronicles?"

"You seriously think your mom is going to let you read any of that stuff?" Stan asks.

"No, but sometimes I like to pretend that I will buy them, just imagine her reaction... She says I can't read Lord of the Rings because she's afraid I'll start practicing witchcraft and I can't read The Hobbit because the dragon is a serpent and the serpent is the sign of the devil."

"My dad has a similar philosophy," Stan nods. "Anything that has magic in it is expressly forbidden in his house. It's like books suddenly become the root of all evil."

"Isn't that more for video games and movies now?" Bev asks.

"Don't you dare speak ill of such things," Richie says, walking into the bookstore. "I figured you nerds would be in here."

"Why aren't you playing Street Fighter?" Beverly asks, rolling her eyes at his nerd insult.

"The damn place didn't have it," the trash-mouth mutters. He has an urge to kick the nearest bookshelf. "How hard is it to get a decent game console that involves racially insensitive characters fighting one another?"

"Probably not hard," Stan says.

"So, is anything remotely good in this place?" the bespectacled kid asks.

"S-Some good stuff," Bill admits. He hands his friend a book.

"Who the hell wants to read a book about a killer car?" Richie asks.

"How about a haunted hotel?" Beverly suggests.

"Why not Frankenstein? Or Dracula? Didn't you used to love those classic horror monsters?" Stan asks.

"Yeah, until they kept making those crappy sequels. Like the Ghost of Frankenstein or Son of the Wolf Man, who the hell cares if the hairy ape has a son, show some blood for god's sake!"

"Beats what we've been through," Beverly mutters quietly to herself.

"You kids going to buy anything?"

...

"So..." Stan says after they walk out of the store. "What should we do now?"

"A-Anyone up for a movie?" Bill asks.

"I'm going to look in some of the stores," Beverly says. "If you'd care to join me."

The guys all look in various directions, clearly not thrilled at the idea.

"That's what I thought," she smirks. Sometimes being the only girl in the group had its perks. When you want alone time, you get it. "We'll meet back here in an hour."

She then walks towards JC Penny and out of the guy's sight, leaving them standing in the middle of the mall.

"I think malls are discriminatory," Richie says randomly as they try to act cool while trying to figure out what to do next.

"Why would you say that?" Bill asks.

"For a chick, it's easy to go off and do stuff; trying on shit and whatnot, but for guys, we don't get that."

"You're crazy," Eddie rolls his eyes.

"There has to be a conspiracy behind it," he utters, louder than he anticipated.

...

Beverly stands in front of one of the mirrors at JC Penny, trying on a blue-coloured hat. It matched nicely with her red hair but still made her look ridiculous. She'd spent all her money on ice cream so it's not like she could afford it. She smiles at her reflection anyways, enjoying the way it looked and even posed slightly like a model from a fashion magazine.

While being the only girl in the Loser's Club did allow her to escape all the testosterone and awkward glances from the boys, it did get pretty lonely after a while. Beverly really wants to have some girlfriends her own age, the idea of trying on clothes for an hour seemed like so much fun. She watches other teenaged girls in the store joke around and poses with neon sunglasses over their eyes. There's even a mother having her young daughter try on a dress for some occasion.

"Mommy, I don't like the sash," the little girl complained. "And the collar is itchy."

"It's okay sweetie, we still have a few more to try on."

Bev swallows heavily and fights back any tears, wishing that she'd done shopping like this with her mom. She never even got the chance, which likely led her father towards what he'd done to her.

She jumps suddenly when a familiar face walks into the store. Fiery red hair and freckles just like her; Max, the girl from school and from the arcade earlier in the day. She's not alone either, she's with another girl about their age... whom Bev had seen before too but was having trouble placing the face.

The girls were giggling with each other before going towards one of the racks of clothes. When the mystery girl turns towards the mirror, Beverly realizes that it's the girl they saw standing the forest next to the school when all that shit went down their first day. It was almost like she controlled whatever happened and the bullies seemed to be afraid of her because they ran like hell once they noticed her. Her heart skipped a beat, wondering what this girl could do... Bev was also a little nervous when Max looked her way too. It was clear that

the redhead did not like her new classmate, why that was remained to be seen, she just didn't want the girls to start rumours about her like back in Derry.

Bev puts the hat back where she found it and grabs a pair of sunglasses. She decides to pretend not to notice the girls and just keeps staring at her reflection. She watches as the girls whisper to one another after having spotted the girl from Derry. The female member of the Loser's club could not be sure if they were talking about her, but she suspected they were.

The skinny preteen goes to a rack of clothes and begins looking through them, trying not to be noticed. She finds an ugly paisley shirt before a voice startles her.

"Nice shades,"

Bev looks up to see the mystery girl standing nearby, apparently wanting to talk to her.

"Thanks," she says. "Do you want to try them?"

She takes them off and hands them to the girl. She figured that's all the brown-haired girl wanted and begins to search on the clothing racks again.

"You're from Derry, right?"

Beverly locks eyes with the girl again, her stomach turning because she's worried that this girl might do something to humiliate her.

"Yeah, I'm from Derry."

There's another long pause.

"Is it nice?" the girl asks again.

The red head examines the girl carefully and realizes that she's almost as shy as she was. She's twitching slightly and looks down at her shoes a lot. It's obvious that she doesn't talk to people that much. It's slightly comforting to the one from Derry that it wasn't just her that was making things awkward.

"Not really, it's a really small town with a lot of farms. It doesn't even have a mall,"

"No mall?" the girl repeats.

"No mall," Bev smiles. She decides to cut right to the chase. "Are you just trying to make small talk?"

"Small talk?"

"Yeah, like are you trying to start a conversation?"

The girl's eyes go wide, but then she nods before looking at her shoes.

"Sort of,"

"It's okay, I'm not exactly great at keeping a conversation going. Is this awkward for you?"

The girl nods.

"I'm Beverly by the way," she introduces herself.

"El,"

"El? That's a neat name, is it short for something?"

The girl's eyes go wide, that is until Max walks up to them. Her blue eyes seem a bit annoyed.

"Come on El, let's go find the idiots," she shoots Beverly a stone-cold glare before trying to grab her friend's wrist.

Despite looking sad to end their conversation, El turns to follow Max.

"I'll see you around I guess," Bev calls after them as they disappear into the crowded mall.

Her heart drops a bit in disappointment. The girl seemed nice; obviously trying to make new friends, but the chance to really get to know each other passed and with an angry glare from Max.

Bev decides to go browse another store before going to find the boys,

wondering how many more times she'd run into Max and El again.

A/N: Please follow and review